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WAS SAVONAROLA

REALLY

EXCOMMUNICATED?

An Inquiry

BY

REV. J. L. O'NEIL, O.P.

Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity; Thou wilt destroy all who speak a lie. — PSALM v. 6.

Thou hast tried me by fire, and iniquity hath not been found in me. — PSALM xvi. 4.

Wisdom hath shown them to be liars that accused him; and gave him everlasting glory. — WISDOM x. 14.

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To My Friend,

JOHN A. MOONEY, LL.D.

A WORD TO THE READER.

"Now if, like one new in the controversy and unacquainted with either side, you exercise your judicial character, it will be easy for me to show that all things human are dubious, and hang in uncertainty, and that probabilities, not truths, are (often) the result of our inquiries; and, therefore, it is the less wonderful that some, disgusted at the trouble of thoroughly investigating the truth, should have chosen to yield a hasty assent to any opinion whatever, rather than to persevere with unremitting diligence in the search."

In the spirit of Minucius Felix, whose words I have quoted from the fifth chapter of his "Octavius,"[1] I remind the reader that truth rewards only the persevering seeker. Having sought it in this inquiry, the result is offered to those who can appreciate the Encyclical of our Holy Father Leo XIII., on the study of history, in which he applauds Cicero's famous dictum: "Dare not the

[1] Page 244.

mention of aught that is false; fear not the mention of aught that is true." In defence of a great Dominican, who, could his voice now be heard, would repeat the Pontiff's words, this volume is sent forth by a fellow-Dominican who is mindful of his Order's noble motto: VERITAS.

FEAST OF S. ANTONINUS,
May 10, 1899.

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NOTE.

The manuscript of the following pages was placed in the hands of the publishers during the summer of 1899.

The difficulties attending the reading of the proofs, on account of the author's absence, have delayed its appearance until the present time.

WAS SAVONAROLA REALLY EXCOMMUNICATED?

INTRODUCTION.

DURING a period of four hundred years, writers who have discussed the life of Savonarola have, with almost unvarying unanimity, regarded as an admitted portion of the Friar's eventful career the supposed fact of his excommunication. The question which we propose is not new; it was raised and warmly discussed in Savonarola's day; but with the exception of contemporary supporters, and of a few modern defenders, advocates of the Friar have generally confined themselves to a protest against the harshness and injustice of the censure.

The matter, therefore, seemed closed to all discussion touching the validity of the excommunication, and though earnest students of his life have been sorely puzzled over the trying contradiction presented in Savonarola's history, — an

excommunicated man the object of saints' veneration, — they have deemed it more prudent, in default of convincing evidence, and despite the learning and vigor with which the Friar's cause has been sustained, to follow what theologians call "the safer side." Thus the case seemed destined to remain in confusion, if not in mystery, until an Italian Dominican, Father John Lottini, the successor of Savonarola, as present Vicar of Saint Mark's Congregation, re-opened the question.

This writer does not enter into any canonical contention as to defects in the Brief of excommunication; he does not enlarge upon legal conditions unfulfilled; he simply but clearly draws attention to the nature of the pontifical command and of the censure attached, and claims that the Friar did not commit the prohibited acts, and that consequently he did not render himself amenable to the penalty of excommunication.

As a result of my investigations I believe that Father Lottini has sustained his plea, that he has shed light where it was most needed; and I availed of his argument. Believing, moreover, that a precise presentation of all the facts bearing on this case will serve the cause of true history, and that the interest awakened in the life of Savonarola, coincidently with the celebration of the fourth centenary of his death, is not only sustained but enhanced; and being eager, not for

partisan criticism or adulatory apology, but for further testimony in the name of Truth, I entered on this study, having one aim and purpose, — the finding of the truth.

With this end in view I have spared no pains to make myself familiar with all the documents bearing on the case. My task was rendered comparatively easy by the work of Italian and French scholars who have made the special study of Savonarola the object of their devoted labor for many years. In mentioning the names of Marchese, Cappelli, Gherardi, Cittadella, Guasti, Villari, Luotto, among others, I refer to men who have vindicated the truth as contemporary letters, despatches, and documents of Savonarola's time and his own authentic writings have revealed it. Father Louis Ferretti, editor of the Italian Magazine *Quarto Centenario della Morte di Fra Girolamo Savonarola*, has also rendered praiseworthy service in the same good cause. To Father Ferretti I am greatly indebted for unfailing courtesy and for generous help in making researches for me in Florence.

To the compilation of Father James Quetif, a seventeenth-century French Dominican, I am also under special obligations. Another Frenchman, F. T. Perrens, was, in recent days, a diligent student of the Friar, and his fellow-countryman Father E. C. Bayonne, O. P., spent many years in gathering original documents bearing on Savona-

rola's life. Father Bayonne published in 1880 three volumes of the Friar's spiritual writings which are still available; but his *Study* was withdrawn from circulation in deference to the extreme sensibilities of certain French prelates whose timidity would scarcely allow them to grant a *nihil obstat* to Pastor's work. But that was before Leo XIII. had opened the secret archives of the Vatican. Only within a few months have I been able to command a copy of Father Bayonne's excellent volume. Simultaneously I learned that I had been misinformed, when I published my "Sketch," as to the nature of the "censure" passed on his *Study*. I take great pleasure in bearing testimony to its moderate tone, its general merit, and in paying a tribute to the devoted man whose generous labors deserve high praise. I have made free use of this book. I have also studied the Friar's sermons, particularly those delivered during the period of the excommunication, so that I might clearly know his own mind. Indeed, I may have, at times, unconsciously presented his sentiments and arguments without the formality of special reference.

Prudent readers who may follow this inquiry will, in a spirit of equity, consider these facts pertaining to my authorities, and in this light their calm judgment will not be unduly swayed by the too positive utterance, even of a great writer, with whom Savonarola has been neither an object of

original research nor a factor of more than secondary and passing importance. Some of the letters and documents given in this brochure have never before, so far as I can ascertain, been translated from their original Latin or Italian. A few have been issued in English, but the series now appears, for the first time, newly translated, complete, and in chronological order, in one volume.[1]

To enable the reader to group the evidence, I consider it desirable to give a concise account of the facts leading to the excommunication of Savonarola, and intimately connected with it. Into this account and as the main part of it, the Briefs and letters of Pope and Friar, with other documents of essential testimony, are woven, without needless comment or irrelevant gloss. Due reference is also made to the evidence of men who actively shared in Savonarola's struggle.

To this momentous chapter of the great preacher's absorbing career I add such reflections on the principles of canon law and theology as I judge necessary for a proper elucidation of the case.

[1] The Florentines began the year with the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, whereas the Romans commenced with January 1, as we do. Forgetfulness or ignorance of this fact has occasioned confusion in some histories of the Friar. Failure to assign the correct dates to several of Savonarola's letters, and to Alexander's Briefs, has placed the former in a false position and represented him as an aggressor, where his attitude was only that of respectful defence. Gherardi and Bayonne have rendered special service in the work of verifying the dates of important documents.

The application of these principles to the facts will form my conclusion. As I hope to bring out, within a short time, another small volume, answering the question "Was Savonarola a prophet?" and as I intend, please God, to give, later on, fuller development to my recently published "Sketch," embodying the Prior's letters and characteristic extracts from his other writings, with a view of his inner life, — practically new ground, at least for those familiar only with English — the studious reader will recognize that this seemingly fragmentary treatment is necessary for the harmonious effect of my entire plan.

I.

FACTS, BRIEFS, AND LETTERS.

1495.

WITHOUT narrating in detail all the events preceding the supposed excommunication of Savonarola I may remind the reader that the "contradictions" which his sermons had occasioned, the enmities which his reforms had aroused, the "interests"[1] which his salutary measures had threatened, uniting in a spirit of revenge, had concentrated their embittered energies at the Roman Court, where the Pope was overwhelmed with misrepresentations and calumnies of the zealous Florentine preacher. His opponents desired to silence his powerful voice. Slanderously accusing Savonarola of teaching heretical doctrine, and of being the chief cause of the Florentines' refusal to join the League against the French, in which Alexander VI. was interested, they succeeded in awakening his suspicion and provoking his anger against the Friar.[2] For several months

[1] Chiefly of usurers, keepers of immoral resorts, self-seeking politicians, dishonest merchants, and libertines.

[2] See Villari, ii. 2; Cappelli, pp. 65, 66, 109; Burlamacchi, p. 551; Nardi, L. ii., p. 58; Luotto, chap. 29.

the flame had been diligently fanned by Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, a brother of Ludovico "the Moor," the usurping Duke of Milan, who, though he had been the immediate cause of precipitating the French expedition of 1494, had subsequently become the political enemy of Savonarola because the Florentines refused to relinquish the French alliance. The Prior of St. Mark's was regarded as the instigator of the policy of the Republic. Somenzi, the Duke's ambassador to Florence, shamefully abusing the privileges of his position, plotted against the Friar, on whose "impious ways" as a friend and supporter of the existing Florentine Government Somenzi bitterly commented.[1] Among the *Arrabbiati* he found ardent co-operators, and he was also ably assisted in his nefarious work by the Milanese envoy at Bologna.[2]

Shortly after Lent, 1495, the Pope made a special effort to detach the Florentines from the French, and sent an accredited agent for this purpose, Master Albert of Orvieto. His diplomacy failing, the *Arrabbiati* and other opponents of the re-established Government easily succeeded in convincing the papal envoy that his want of success was due to Savonarola, and that, as he was the greatest obstacle to the Pope's plans, the Friar should be driven from Florence.[3]

[1] Del Lungo, N. 5. [2] Cappelli, p. 66.

[3] Id., pp. 64, 65. The *Arrabbiati* had plotted for the same end during the preceding year. (Luotto, p. 443.)

Alexander's representative thereupon reported to him that Savonarola's preaching was scandalous and heretical, as well as most injurious to His Holiness and to Italy in general, and he strongly urged the Pontiff to order the Friar to proceed to Rome.[1] Yielding to the various influences that had so persistently beset him, and being further prejudiced against the Friar because of the erroneous or exaggerated reports of his sermons, Alexander despatched to Savonarola the following Brief, which bore date of July 21, 1495 : —

Beloved Son, — Health and Apostolic blessing! We have learned from many sources that, among the many who labor in the vineyard of the Lord, your efforts have been especially earnest. This fills us with great joy and gratitude to God, Who so powerfully works through us by His grace. Nor do we doubt that you, by the Divine Spirit Who distributes imperishable graces, will so sow the seed of the word of God among the people that it will bear fruit a hundred-fold. Moreover, recent letters on this very subject have given us to understand that in all your sermons you instruct the people in the service of God. And be-

[1] Cappelli, 109. Consult also contemporary historians of Florence, as Nardi, Pitti, Guicciardini ; and the correspondence of the envoy of Ludovico " the Moor," as given by Del Lungo, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. xvii., part ii., new series. Luotto, chapter 29, shows how persistent slander, by enemies of the Friar, had more effect in deceiving the Pope and deciding his action than any of the political combinations.

cause we are also informed that in your public discourses you announce future events, being moved thereto, not by human learning or wisdom, but by the Spirit of God, and desiring, as becomes our pastoral office, to confer with you on this, so that, knowing more clearly, we may do what will be pleasing to God, we exhort you to come to us as soon as possible, and to that effect we command you in virtue of holy obedience. We shall greet you with fatherly tenderness and love.[1]

To this Brief, Savonarola made answer on July 31 : —

Most Holy Father, — I prostrate myself at the feet of your Holiness. Although I am aware that we must always obey the commands of our superiors, since we read in Holy Scriptures that "he who heareth you, heareth Me," still it is their meaning and not merely their words that we have to consider. Hence, in the chapter *Si quando*, etc., *De rescriptis*,[2] your Holiness will recall the manner in which one of your predecessors, Alexander the Third, addressed the Archbishop of Ravenna: "Having maturely considered the sub-

[1] The original Latin is given by Perrens, pp. 352, 353, and by Villari: Appendix vol. i., document 23. From a letter of Manfredi to the Duke of Ferrara, dated July 26, we may conclude that the Brief was received on that day in Florence. (Cappelli, p. 65.) Luotto (pp. 442, 443) proves that Cardinal Sforza was the author of this Brief, and that it was a snare skilfully laid for the Friar by the "Moor's" scheming brother, in shameful deception of the Pope.

[2] Lib. i. Decretalium Gregorii Papæ, tit. iii., cap. v.

ject of your letter, we say, either fulfil our command, with respect, or give to us a legitimate reason for your refusal; because we shall be most indulgent towards you, if we find that you are not culpable in things of which evil men have caused us to suspect you." [1]

And because I have long desired to visit Rome, which I have never seen, and to worship at the shrine of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, to venerate the relics of so many saints, and to see your Holiness, these ardent longings have redoubled since I received the letter of your Holiness deigning to invite one so unworthy to your presence. But as there are many difficulties in the way, I shall endeavor to lay before your Holiness my reasonable excuses, so that you may judge that it is necessity, and not unwillingness, which prevents me from immediately obeying the command which I received with the greatest joy and reverence.

In the first place, fever and dysentery, from which I have lately suffered, have greatly weakened my health. Then the constant strain of mind and body because of extraordinary labors during the past year for the welfare of this city has so debilitated me, my stomach has so failed me, that I am utterly unfitted for further labor. The physicians have obliged me to relinquish all study and preaching, for, in their opinion and that of many others, I shall soon endanger my life unless I submit to medical treatment.[2]

[1] Panormitanus, tom. i., cap. v., p. 41.

[2] Under like circumstances Pope St. Gregory the Great praised a bishop for his declining to come to Rome when sum-

Moreover, the Lord has used me to deliver this city from bloodshed and from many other evils, and for the establishment of peace with holy laws. In consequence, evil men in the city and beyond it, citizens and strangers, eager for bloodshed and plunder, seeking their own exaltation and the destruction of this city's liberty, have become my bitter enemies, because I have frustrated their designs. Enraged against me, and hating me, they so plot for my death, either by the dagger or by poison, that I cannot leave the house without an escort. And therefore, when I went to the French king, though I was protected by a most faithful guard, the Florentines who love the Republic would not allow me to go beyond their territory. I trust in God; nevertheless, that I may not seem to tempt Him, I consider it well not to despise ordinary precautions; for it is written, "When they persecute you in one city, flee into another."

Moreover, the recent reform in Florence which the Lord has wrought is still only feebly rooted. It needs daily care and strengthening, so that it may be able to withstand the efforts of wicked men who seek its injury and ruin. Since, therefore, in the opinion of all prudent and good men, my departure from the city at this time would be an occasion of grave danger, I believe that your Holiness will approve of this delay, until the work which has been commenced will be perfected. For its benefit these impediments to my journey seem providential, for it is not the will of God that I should be absent.

moned. (Lib. x., Ep. 45, p. 1102, tom. iii. of St. Gregory, tom. lxxii. of Patrology.)

But I hope to be able, within a short time, to go to Rome, bringing a fuller account of this apostolate. And if in the meantime your Holiness desires to know more fully what I have publicly predicted concerning the misfortunes of Italy and the reformation of the Church, I shall send to your Holiness a copy of the book which I am now having printed, as soon as I shall receive it from the publisher.[1] This volume will fully declare all that your Holiness could hear from me, for I have said nothing that is not herein contained. I have only announced what was committed to me; to have attempted to unveil the hidden secrets of God would have been sinful. I have arranged for the publication of these predictions so that the whole world may know, if they are not fulfilled, that I am a false prophet. But if these events come to pass, let thanks be rendered to God our Saviour, Who shows such solicitude for our salvation that He wishes no one to perish eternally.

Finally, I pray your Holiness to accept these my excuses as most true and evident, and to believe that I desire nothing more than to obey you and to fulfil your commands; and further, I entreat you not to burden me beyond my strength. I shall need no other spur than my own desire to satisfy your Holiness, as soon as these obstacles are removed. I most humbly commend myself to your Holiness.[2]

To make clear Savonarola's position it is necessary to state that on finishing the Lenten course

[1] He refers to the "Compendium of Revelations."

[2] The Latin text is given by Villari, Appendix vol. i., Document 24, and by Perrens, pp. 353–355.

of 1495 his health was impaired. He had passed through a trying ordeal of uninterrupted care and anxiety; and the strain of the year had borne so heavily on him that he intimated to his audience that he might be obliged to relinquish his work in the pulpit. He spoke more clearly to this effect on June 24, July 5, July 12,[1] stating definitely on this last named date that illness compelled him to discontinue his preaching. When the Pope's Brief of July 21 came, Savonarola was confined to the convent, under the care of physicians.[2]

On the 28th, despite his feeble health, he delivered a brief address to the magistrates and leading citizens, warning them against impending dangers, and exhorting them to renewed vigilance in the defence of liberty, and to fidelity in virtue, concluding with a touching prayer to Jesus Christ that He would deign to preserve in their reform of life the people of Florence, and that he himself might be made worthy of the reward which had ever been the portion of the Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs of his Divine Master.

Savonarola was fully informed of the plots of the *Arrabbiati*, who were resolved to assassinate him. The attempt made on his life in the open street was still fresh in the minds of his friends, who not only guarded him, but kept diligent watch

[1] Sermons 23, 24, 25 on the Psalms.
[2] Luotto, p. 450.

on the movements and plots of his sworn enemies.[1] Considering, therefore, the mode of travel prevalent in those days, and that Savonarola made all his journeys on foot, and mindful of the fact that among his opponents were men of desperate purpose, to whom a sacrilegious murder would be but as a move on the political chess-board, it may be reasonably claimed that a visit to Rome by Savonarola was then practically impossible. Indeed, had he set out, it is extremely doubtful that he would ever have reached the Eternal City. To expose himself to almost certain murder was not an obligation; nor is our Divine Lord's example wanting: "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Judea because the Jews sought to kill Him." [2]

Though the Pope's reply, if he sent a written one, is not preserved, we know from Savonarola's own words that Alexander had conveyed to him by some messenger, or probably through the Car-

[1] He refers to their murderous purpose in his sermon for the Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday of Lent, 1496, and in several other discourses. Pico della Mirandola (chapter vii. of his "Vita Savonarolæ") declares that the Friar's friends, moved by just anxiety and deep devotion, insisted on providing for him an escort, though he himself was strongly averse to it. Another contemporary, Landucci, tells us (Diary for May 24, 1495) of the attack made on Savonarola's life that day, and adds that his followers had grave reason to fear that he would again be assailed, either by dagger or poison, for these enemies, who were also the foes of virtue and public decency, were bent on his destruction. See also Villari, ii. 25; Perrens, p. 176.

[2] St. John vii. 1.

dinal Protector of the Order, or the Master General, his gracious acceptance of the Friar's excuses.[1] Thus the pontifical command to visit Rome was practically suspended or revoked.

The month of August passed, and the Feast of our Lady's Nativity, September 8, found Savona-

[1] Sermon for February 18, 1498; Bayonne, p. 74. Luotto (pp. 457, 458) inclines to the belief that the Pope did not receive the letter written by Savonarola on July 31, at least until after the Brief of September 8 had been forwarded. It is only in such an hypothesis that the professor can discover an explanation of the harshness of this latter Brief, unless politics, under the cloak of religion, be admitted as the sole prompting motive, and this he denies. Despite the fact that the Pope's own words (see Briefs of October 16, 1495, and May 13, 1497) are in agreement with Savonarola's statement, without mentioning the time when the letter was received, the Friar's complaint (see his letter of September 29, 12th section) that his letter was kept from the Pontiff would seem to sustain Luotto's claim, who solves the difficulty as to time by suggesting that the letter subsequently came to Alexander's hands, after the issue of the Brief of September 8. I confess I do not feel the convincing force of the professor's argument, — it leaves too many difficulties unsolved; and yet I incline to his view that the letter was suppressed, while Savonarola was still further misrepresented as a religious innovator and disturber, disobedient and defiant to the Holy See. Such pretexts, under the skilful manipulation of the "Moor," his wily brother the Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, the Medici, and other plotters determined to ruin Savonarola, might well stir the Pope to indignation, after his gentle summons had been, as these malignant slanderers insinuated to him, contemptuously treated by the Friar. Knowing the character, or rather, want of character of many of Savonarola's enemies, utterly unscrupulous assassins of reputations, and often of lives, our sympathies may be divided between the deceived and harassed Pontiff and the calumniated, persecuted, and helpless Friar.

rola still silent and in retirement. Father Dominic had taken his place in the pulpit of the Duomo. Suddenly, as by thunder from a clear sky, Florence was aroused by the arrival of a second Brief, plainly the work of the Friar's enemies, who had taken advantage of his seclusion, and, redoubling their efforts to effect his downfall, had abused the confidence of the Pope, and deceived him through a calumnious misrepresentation of Savonarola's teaching.[1]

A literal translation of the Pope's letter is here given. Though addressed to his beloved sons, the Prior and community of St. Mark's, Alexander nevertheless directed and sent the Brief to the Friars Minor of the Church of the Holy Cross, Florence. It reads as follows : [2] —

[1] Seeing that this first attempt had failed, the Mediceans adopted more effectual means. They wrote most ingratiating letters to Ludovico the Moor, Lord of Milan, to Piero de' Medici and his brother the Cardinal, and to several other Roman prelates, urging them to exert their influence with the Pope, not only to have the preaching of Savonarola suspended, but also to have him removed from Florence. It was not difficult to obtain this from Alexander, who, in a threatening letter withdrew from the Friar permission to preach, and commanded him to leave Florence and Tuscany. But when the rumor of this spread through the city, a great clamor arose among the people, who well knew what was hidden under the pontificial command, and what disorder and irreparable injury would be inflicted on the new State, which had its best protection in the authority and eloquence of Savonarola. For this reason "The Ten" worked so industriously that the order was recalled. — MARCHESE : *San Marco*, p. 118.

[2] The original Latin may be found in Quetif, pp. 130 *seq.*,

Alexander the Sixth, Pope, to his beloved sons, the Prior and Community of St. Mark's, Florence:

Beloved Sons, — Health and Apostolic blessing!

As the high and inscrutable design of God has placed us, though unworthy, to rule His Holy Church in these times, as Peter's successor, it behooves us, by all the power of God's grace, with constant diligence and zeal, so to guard religion that the peace and salvation of Christians may not only be assured, but that they may grow and flourish.

Novelties in doctrine, however (adopted under the pretext of simplicity, from which, among clergy and laity, schisms, heresies, and perversion of morals often arise), must therefore be driven from the Church with the rod of correction, lest the quiet of the faithful be now disturbed, and the power of causing future tumults be likewise placed in the hands of men by reason of this example.

We have learned that a certain Jerome Savonarola of Ferrara, of the Order of Preachers, seduced by this novelty of evil doctrine, and led into a state of insane folly through the disturbed condition of Italian affairs, has announced to the people, without any canonical authority, and against the canonical regulations, that he is sent by God and that with God he holds converse. It is not sufficient that one will simply assert that he is sent by God, since every heretic avows this, but it is necessary that he confirm his invisible mission

and in Luotto, Appendix. The autograph copy was found by Father Bayonne, in 1874, and then the correct date — September 8 — was ascertained.

by working miracles, or by special testimony of Holy Writ.

We have also learned that, among other unbecoming things which he has spoken or written, he has declared that Jesus Christ Crucified lies and that God lies if he tells not the truth, — certainly a horrible and execrable adjuration, — and that whoever does not believe his foolish assertions is outside the pale of salvation.

Were such things allowed to pass with impunity, there would be no limit to the dangerous rashness of false doctrine, and under the guise of virtues vices would make headway among the faithful — a thing fearful indeed! After our long delay and continued patience we thought that he would recognize the folly of his claiming to be a prophet, and that he would return to the way of solid truth, and wisely and faithfully recall the addresses, rashly and iniquitously spoken, which have been the cause of such disturbance in the Church.

We believed that the time had come when we might think better of him, when the sorrow (which till this present time has afflicted us) because of his unbridled arrogance and scandalous separation from the Lombard Fathers — an affair consummated through the craft and cunning of certain perverse friars — would, through his humble submission, be turned into joy. But, sad to say, our hope was not realized. For, although by our letter we admonished him in virtue of holy obedience that he should come to us, so that we might learn the truth from himself, nevertheless, he not only refused to obey us, but rendered our sorrow more bitter by impudently printing and publishing what he had previously only

rashly spoken. Occupied as we are with the great and laborious work of restoring peace to Italy, we have decided to refer this matter to Father Sebastian Maggi, of your Order, Vicar General of the Congregation of Lombardy, commissioning him by another Brief to judge this case according to the laws of your Order, and to inflict such penalties as he may deem necessary. Moreover, we strictly command the said Jerome Savonarola, in virtue of holy obedience, and under penalty of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, that with prompt and sincere obedience he will recognize the said Vicar as the judge delegated by us to consider his case, and that he will accept the Vicar's orders, going wherever he is directed, ready without delay and without appeal, to obey.

In the meantime, while this case is in review before the said Vicar, we declare the aforesaid Jerome suspended from every office of preaching to the people, and from all manner of public speaking. Moreover, lest the evil example of the same Jerome should ensnare any of your friars, affording them an opportunity of erring and of deceiving others, we reunite, incorporate, and join to the aforesaid Lombard Congregation the Dominican Convent of St. Mark, Florence, and that of St. Dominic, Fiesole, commanding all the brethren of these communities, under pain of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, that they will consider and obey as their legitimate superior the Vicar of the aforesaid Congregation ; revoking now, and declaring revoked, all authority, power, or faculties granted to others, even by Apostolic authority. We also enjoin, under the same penalty of excommunication *latæ sen-*

tentiæ, that, on receipt of this letter, Fathers Dominic of Pescia,[1] Thomas Busino, and Sylvester of Florence,[1] will set out for Bologna, arriving there within nine days, when they will place themselves at the disposal of the aforesaid Vicar of Lombardy, who will assign them to any convent of his jurisdiction, except within the Florentine territory.

In contrarium, etc.,

Given, etc., September 8, 1495.

The reader will note, first, that between the issue of the two Briefs of July 21 and September 8 a period of less than seven weeks had elapsed; secondly, that the Pope had excused Savonarola from the requirements of the former Brief; and, thirdly, that the volume — the "Compendium of Revelations"— of which the present letter complains was in the printer's hands before the receipt by Savonarola of the Brief of July 21, a fact which he mentioned in his answer of July 31.

The reader is also reminded that the enjoyment by St. Mark's of a jurisdiction independent of Lombardy had been secured, not by any irregular arrangement, but by a return to a former and constitutional method of administration; and that this was a movement in behalf of religious reform and stricter discipline, which had been effected by the authority of Alexander himself.[2] Of this

[1] Subsequently condemned to death with Savonarola.

[2] Bullarium, iv. 100.

Savonarola speaks in the answer which he forwarded in due time to the Pope.

The Brief of September 8 was transferred to St. Mark's by the Franciscans, Savonarola being then at Fiesole for rest and change because of his illness.[1] On his return he at once made known to his community the contents of the papal letter, and addressed to His Holiness an answer which we give in full:[2] —

Most Holy Father, — I prostrate myself at the feet of your Holiness. Yesterday I received the Brief in which your Holiness intimates that the convents of St. Mark's and of Fiesole have been annexed to the Lombard Congregation, and in which your Holiness commands Fathers Dominic of Pescia, Thomas Busino, and Sylvester of Florence to go to Bologna. The reason given for these changes is that I, Brother Jerome, have told and preached to the people (contrary to canonical prescriptions) many foolish and extravagant things capable of easily causing scandal in the Church of God.

By other letters your Holiness has submitted my cause to the judicial inquiry and judgment of the Vicar of the said Congregation. I have read these

[1] Gherardi, p. 388.

[2] Quetif, p. 136 *seq.*, gives the original Latin, the text of which we have conformed to Bayonne's as given by him in "*Œuvres Spirituelles Choisies de Jérôme Savonarole*," iii., pp. 186–200. Luotto, p. 457, claims that the date should be September 29, which we adopt as more probable than that of September 14, as given by Bayonne.

Briefs in a reverent spirit, and with all the respect due to them, since they prove the solicitude of your Holiness for the interests of the Church and for the salvation of our souls. But I was deeply moved and am still grieved to see how the malice of men could go so far as not to fear suggesting things so false and so perversely interpreted, to the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth. Since, according to the tenor of the Brief, these changes have been ordered on account of myself and of the alleged fault, will your Holiness deign to excuse me, if I, who am reputed to be the author of this storm, endeavor to defend myself against wrongful interpretations, assertions, and suggestions, by a simple statement of facts, and by a true and sincere account of the good which has already been wrought, and which will, I hope, be accomplished in the future. This will be no difficult task, because I have always spoken openly to the world, I have always taught in the Church and in the Temple, where all Christians meet, and in secret I have said nothing. I have, therefore, thousands of witnesses to my rectitude and orthodoxy, so that I am confident of being able to defend my cause before your Holiness without the slightest difficulty. Has not a philosopher said that "truth is ever in harmony with truth, never with falsehood"?

It has been suggested, therefore, to your Holiness (for it is patent by your Holiness's Briefs), first, that I had allowed myself to be seduced by the novelty of perverse doctrine. A falsehood on the very face of it! for it is of public notoriety that I neither adopt

nor preach any perverse doctrine, but only the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, and that I have frequently repeated from the pulpit, and have declared in writing, that I submitted both myself and all that concerns me to the Holy Roman Church. If I remember aright, I stated this in a letter to your Holiness, to which letter reference is made in a Brief addressed to me by your Holiness. Will it be said that to preach future events is a new dogma.? This would be an error. Such preaching has always existed in the Church of God, which fact is clear to all who read ecclesiastical history. Such preaching is not injurious to the Christian Religion, so long as it does not offend against faith, morals, or right reason. Such preaching has never been prohibited, nor can it be forbidden by any law. For that would be to lay down a law for God, who said by His prophet, "The Lord God doth nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets."[1]

2d. The Brief says that I have come to this state of madness in consequence of the disturbed condition of Italian affairs. This is equally false. Everybody knows that I prophesied these things more than five years ago; yea, even more than ten years ago; and, nevertheless, I did not speak them in consequence of the upheaval of the Peninsula.

3d. I have been reproached with saying that I was sent by God. Another untruth ! All my hearers know that I never said anything of the kind; I have declared in my writings, which all men may read, that

[1] Amos iii. 7.

I was sent by my superiors, just as nearly all the other preachers were. I have never declared that I was sent by God *alone*, as thousands of witnesses can testify.

4th. I am blamed in the Brief for having said that I spoke with God. I never positively said so, and never used such an expression, as the entire Florentine people can testify. Even if I had said so I would not have thereby incurred any penalty, for neither canon nor civil law nor any authentic book declares that he who says he holds converse with God ought to be punished. It would be both impious and foolish to enact such a law, for no man can impose a law upon God, Who can speak with whom He will and can command him to say, "Thus saith the Lord," as did the prophets.

5th. I have been denounced, likewise, as having said: The Crucified God Himself lies, if I myself lie. Now, I *never* said this in a positive manner, as if I wished to make myself equal to God. I spoke hypothetically, as, for instance, a man who would say, "There shall be signs in the sun, moon and stars," and who would add, "If I lie, Christ lies also." Is this a manner of execrable imprecation? Well, after having announced some truth taught by Christ, I have sometimes added simply, "If I speak falsely, so also does Christ."

6th. I have likewise been reproached with having declared all those who should not have faith in my vain assertions, as outside the way of salvation. This is how I expressed myself: knowing that many of my predictions come from God, I consider that any one

who obstinately refuses to place faith in them, and intends to contradict them absolutely, thereby proves that he is not in a state of grace. As a matter of fact, grace and the light of faith incline the mind to truth; consequently, whoever possesses grace could not oppose a truth confirmed by God. As for those who, while not believing my words, still do not obstinately contradict them, I have said and publicly written, that in spite of this, they can be in a state of grace, and in the way of salvation. I have not affirmed, therefore, that they sinned, but only that obstinacy and contradiction were a sign of deprivation of grace.

7th. The Brief then adds: "He has done, said, and written other no less foolish things." Now the whole people are a witness that I neither say nor do foolish or scandalous things; that, on the contrary, my words have great power and are very necessary, that they bring forth much fruit, and that they tend to the salvation of souls, to the peace of the city, and to the reform of morals. And since it is written, "Every word is confirmed by the mouth of two or three witnesses," I undertake to produce, not two or three witnesses, but two, three, or even ten thousand witnesses, who will proclaim the truth, together with the works accomplished, not by myself, but by God and through my ministry; and they will prove that I have never said or done such things as wicked men have invented against me.

8th. The Brief again adds: "We had hoped that our forbearance and great patience would have finally brought him to disclaim this foolish declaration of being a prophet." As for myself, I believe that no man

lives who has ever heard fall from my lips these arrogant words: I am a prophet. Several thousand men can certify to the contrary; I have often declared that I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. And if I had said it, I do not see why I should be punished! No law has ever been enacted, or could be enacted, against the man who would declare that he was announcing the future by Divine inspiration, unless he used it as a cloak to excite the people to evil, to heresy, or to commit the other crimes mentioned in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. Now it is clear that nothing of the kind could be imputed to me. Moreover, if I am wrong in my understanding of the matter, no prophet could arise in the Church of God, and the gift of prophecy would henceforth be banished from her bosom, which is contrary to the words of Amos, already quoted, and to what is said in Proverbs: "When prophecy shall fail, the people shall be scattered." [1]

It will be objected that it is written in Deuteronomy, "The prophet who being corrupted with pride shall speak in My name things that I did not command him to say, or in the name of strange gods, shall be slain. Whatsoever that same prophet foretelleth in the name of the Lord, and it cometh not to pass, that thing the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath forged it by the pride of his mind, and therefore thou shalt not fear him." [2]

I reply that these words must not be interpreted in the sense that the prophet ought to be put to death if his prophecies are not immediately realized, otherwise Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many other prophets ought to

[1] Prov. xxix. 18. [2] Deut. xviii. 20, 22.

have been put to death, who lived on for many years before the realization of their predictions, and died without seeing all of them accomplished.

This is how the above-quoted words are to be interpreted: If any man declares that he foretells future events by Divine inspiration, and if his predictions are not opposed to Faith, the Holy Scriptures, or to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, the realization of such must be patiently awaited; and this man must not be despised, especially if he leads a holy life, because God has many hidden and unknown servants, and because the Apostle has said: "Do not despise prophecies."

If, on the contrary, the prophecies are not accomplished at the time specified by the prophet, then he must be severely corrected. This is how the law must be interpreted; but, nevertheless, not in every case, since Jonah could announce that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days, without anything of the kind happening, and without his deserving any chastisement. If, therefore, I have foretold future events, and if several of my predictions have already been realized, there is no need to correct or punish me as yet. I should only merit chastisement if my other predictions were not verified in their season; now I am confident that they will be verified to the very letter.

It is certainly true, most Holy Father, and it is of public notoriety, not only here, but in several other cities of Italy, that my words have established peace in Florence, and that, without this peace, the whole of Italy would have been in a state of riot. More than this, if faith had been placed in my words, Italy would not be agitated as it is to-day. Foreseeing the tribula-

tions reserved for the country, I preached (although many always scorned me) that the sword was about to descend, and I showed that penance was the sole remedy so as to obtain peace. The whole Peninsula, therefore, ought to thank God for my preaching. I taught it the certain remedy to obtain peace. Florence, having adopted it, now enjoys a benefit which otherwise it would not have known; and if Italy had imitated this city, the Peninsula would not be torn by wars from one end to another. No man can truthfully say that I have caused dissensions; but many will bear witness that I have sown good seed. The enemy, however, has sown cockle.

9th. The Brief likewise speaks of the fraud and cunning of certain brethren, etc. (*a*) Such a qualification applied to religious who, far from being branded with infamy, enjoy an excellent reputation throughout the entire city, sufficiently proves that it could only have been suggested to your Holiness by wicked men. Let your Holiness deign to send here a faithful minister to question the citizens and the people concerning the reputation of the religious of St. Mark's and of Fiesole, and your Holiness will recognize still better that these wicked men have told grievous falsehoods, have been guilty of a flagrant injustice. (*b*) It is false that their separation from the Lombard Congregation was only demanded by a few. It was asked for by all, as a public document proves. (*c*) The separation was demanded, not that a freer and easier life might be led, but a more strict and severe one, as was subsequently proved. (*d*) Finally, the separation was not obtained fraudulently, but after prolonged discussion and mature

examination, as the most reverend Protector of our Order, Oliver Caraffa, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, Archbishop of Naples, can bear witness. He obtained the separation for us through his wisdom and prudence. By the very terms of our Constitutions, the Province of Tuscany is distinct from the Province of Lombardy, and the one must not dominate the other. The number of its religious having singularly diminished on account of a plague which devastated the Tuscan convents, the Master General declared the Convent of St. Mark united with, or rather commended to the care of, the Lombard Congregation.[1] Later on, a prior, unknown to the religious, obtained a Brief which united, by Apostolic authority, the convents of St. Mark, Fiesole, and San Gemignano to the Lombard Congregation. Now, this Brief, having been surreptitiously obtained, was invalid.[2] If the religious of this province, whose number had increased and multiplied, returned to their original jurisdiction by your Holiness's authority, it must be stated that this was not done fraudulently, but conformably to the tenor of our Constitutions.

10th. This is another accusation: "Although we had ordered him in writing to appear," etc., which is likewise unfounded. Certainly, your Holiness called me to Rome, but I hastened to submit to your Holiness, according to canon law *Si quando, De rescriptis,* the just motives which made this journey impossible:

[1] In 1448; so Mazetti, "Monumenta et Antiquitates Veteris Disciplinæ Ord. Praed.," a work inaccessible to me, but the reference to which Father Ferretti verifies for me, as well as suggests; and Marchese: "San Marco," p. 91, and "Scritti Vari," I, 92, 93.

[2] For particulars, see Luotto, 472, 473.

first, because I was ill and an invalid and would have thereby exposed myself to the danger of death; and in the next place, because I have such powerful and implacable enemies that, according to the opinion of all the citizens who are aware of it, I would never have been able to arrive in Rome. This is an open secret in Florence. Finally, there was danger for the city, whose weak form of government still needs my advice to maintain and develop itself. At the close of my letter I besought your Holiness to excuse me because on another occasion I would be able to go to Rome to my greater satisfaction. I am surprised that your Holiness did not receive my answer, and therefore took care to enclose a copy of it in the letter sent to your Holiness yesterday by the community, so that your Holiness might see that they have spoken falsely who said that I refused to obey.

11th. Besides, as your Beatitude is occupied with very grave matters, your Holiness cannot keep an exact account of details. Perverse men, knowing this, have suggested to your Holiness to have my cause examined and judged by the Vicar General of the reformed convents of Lombardy. This judge is not above suspicion in our eyes, and rightly so, because the afore-mentioned separation has provoked the gravest dissensions between his Congregation and ourselves, as is well-known, and their Vicar, together with his subjects, never ceases to attack us.[1]

[1] These words of Savonarola we must understand in a broad sense. Even had Sebastian (as other saints have done) objected to a diminution of his jurisdiction, the purity of his motives cannot be questioned, nor the reform he wished to encourage, and hence he may have been anxious to have the

Your Holiness knows that to appoint as judge over any one a person who is himself an adversary is to violate all Divine and human rights.

12th. Every law exempts a man who has mortal enemies from appearing personally in a place where his life would be in jeopardy, because therein lies a just cause for fear even to a courageous man. Who, therefore, would appear before such a tribunal, and how could any one be expected to submit himself to it, to place himself in the hands of his enemies, and spontaneously to offer himself to a death caused, not by justice, but by violence and wickedness? These are the identical expressions of the Clementine: *Pastoralis de re judic.* Then follows a motive for which a man justly dreads these things and avoids such a death: reason condemns it and nature abhors it. He who

Convent of St. Mark restored to his province. Savonarola's earnestness, and the fact that he wrote under a sense of great grievance, strengthen his words, perhaps unduly; nor can they be applied to B. Sebastian personally. Knowing, moreover, the relations existing between the two men, their mutual esteem, the fatherly and holy interest which the Lombard Vicar General ever had in the welfare of Savonarola, of whom he declared that it was his opinion that the Prior of St. Mark's had never committed a deliberate sin, we must regard these charges against the Lombard friars as levelled at the general body, and not at B. Sebastian, whose appointment as judge is questioned on canonical grounds. Savonarola's complaints were justified, for on June 18, 1493, and on November 16 of the same year, Father Torriano, the Master General, found it necessary to forbid, under threat of excommunication, molestation of St. Mark's reformed brethren. The first letter was addressed to the entire Order, the second to Fr. Vincent de Castro Novo then Vicar General of the Lombard Congregation. Gherardi (pp. 52, 53 and 56, 57) gives the Latin text of both documents.

believed, therefore, that such a command to appear obliged him to do so would be mistaken. Resting on this rule, and on many others, which are in this Clementine and in the chapter *Si quando*, and taking my stand upon the interpretation of the doctors, especially D. Felino,[1] the eminent Auditor of your Holiness, I have a safe conscience, and I can with impunity decline a command, after having submitted to your Holiness so many just reasons. As I have already stated, I have so many powerful and bitter enemies that I cannot go outside the city, nor even from the convent, without taking the greatest precautions, because of the countless snares laid to entrap me. How, therefore, is it that the Brief summons me to appear before the Lombard Vicar, wherever he may summon me, when there are so many places in Italy where I could not go without exposing myself to certain danger of death? Why is this, save because wicked men have craftily suggested falsehoods to your Holiness, and have not given you my letter? [2]

These men are my enemies because I preached truth to them, for truth arouses hatred. After having banished one faction, not out of love for the Commonwealth, but to gratify their ambition, a great number of wicked citizens, desirous of power, began to stir up everywhere various parties and divisions, so that for one head decapitated many others replaced it, as is commonly related of the hydra.

Dissensions, license, discords, quarrels, vengeances, seditions, and murders threatened the entire ruin of

[1] Felinus Sandæus, the celebrated canonist.

[2] See note, p. 16.

the city, with the added misfortune of a powerful king about to invade the Republic. Moved by these considerations and for good reasons, I strove to prevent further plunder. Beset by evils within and without, Florence would have succumbed and the fire would have been kindled for a general conflagration in Italy. Seeing the grave dangers that overhung this city, I used my best endeavors to disarm the wrath of the French king, whom I exhorted to clemency, piety, and religion, urging him to restrain his army from acts of cruelty and pillage, not only in Florence, but in all other places, and ever to keep before his eyes the fear of God.

By His divine aid the city was saved from its great peril, and peace, concord, and the fear of God were publicly established. To this important, even necessary work, I gave unsparingly, by day and night, my strength and energy. I sought the welfare and tranquillity of the citizens and, above all, the honor of God. And behold how ingratitude rewards my labor! But I regret not this, if a great reward awaits me in Heaven. The children of men are false and untrue, nor is there hope in them. I do not fear, for I know that it is written, "They shall hate you because of My Name;" nevertheless, I do not wish to tempt God, for it is also written, "When they persecute you in one place, flee to another." Three times did our Lord give us an example of this, and the Apostle St. Paul frequently defended himself by human means.

13th. The Divine law, canonists, and all the doctors authorize a religious to pass from a less strict to a more severe rule, especially in the same Order, because one

is thus better able to keep the promises he made and to strive for perfection. Such is the teaching of St. Thomas. But to pass to a laxer observance is not allowed.

If, therefore, your Holiness, who desires all religious to aim at perfection, had known that we lead a stricter life than that of the friars in Lombardy, your Holiness would not have commanded us to reunite with them, because such a fusion is possible only by our conforming to their ways. We who are familiar with both Congregations can affirm with certainty that our observance is more severe than theirs, for on the principle "by their fruits ye shall know them" it is clear (*a*) that with us poverty is more rigidly observed; (*b*) in food and clothing we are more sparing; (*c*) in silence we are more faithful, in prayer more frequent; (*d*) the entire city can bear testimony to the different manner of life now followed in St. Mark's from that prevalent when this convent was under Lombard jurisdiction, for every one knows it is stricter; and (*e*) finally, though our members are free to leave if they wish, no one has gone nor does any one wish to go; but in Lombardy they have a penalty of excommunication against those who separate from them without special permission, and yet they can scarcely hold their best friars, who flock to us.

It is evident, therefore, that the reading of the Brief has caused great disturbance among our brethren, who have unanimously resolved to protest to your Holiness that they are determined to be faithful to the promises which they made to God, and that they not only desire no relaxation, but rather wish

that they might be more strictly bound to the Divine service.

14th. We feel certain that your Holiness does not intend to place over these your sheep unsuitable shepherds, for your Holiness will know that as the Lombard friars have so often troubled our peace, such a reunion could not but produce evils, could not but be disagreeable to our brethren, to whom no benefit would come, but rather scandal and further disturbance. Experience proves this, for when they were united, Lombards and Tuscans disagreed. Hence, with good reason, our Constitutions have divided them into two provinces, and therefore your Holiness will not, without a just motive, weld them together.[1]

15th. As your Holiness declares that you have effected this union lest the friars, being left free, would follow my errors, and for that reason you have also ordered three of our brethren to set out for Bologna (the journey to be finished in nine days), and as it is clear that I have not erred as my adversaries have arrogantly claimed, we presume that we can confidently say that it is not your Holiness's intention to insist on these things, for "the cause ceasing, the effect also ceases."

Thus, Holy Father, it is a truth that everything told to your Holiness is false, all pure inventions of evil men who, wishing for my death, seek cunningly to make me leave this city, not that I may go and throw

[1] For a full and satisfactory discussion of the principles involved in this and the preceding number of Savonarola's letter, the reader is referred to the learned Concina, who bears out the truth of the argument made by the Friar. (*Disciplina Apostolico-Monastica, Pars Prima*, Diss. v., cc. 10–13, pp. 166–201.)

myself at your Holiness's feet, because they know how easy it would be for me to justify myself wholly before your Holiness, but so as to assassinate me during the journey and to gratify their ambition. Your Holiness will not disdain, therefore, to listen favorably to my defence and to qualify my conduct as prudent rather than disobedient. I defer, delay, awaiting your benign reply and asking your Holiness to free us from these difficulties. Such is the teaching transmitted by your predecessors, and by the holy doctors, canonists, and theologians, whose testimonies, especially in the chapter *Scribentes,* I would quote here, if they were not already familiar to your Holiness's eminent Auditor, D. Felino of Ferrara. As for the truth of all my affirmations, it will not be difficult for me to prove it as soon as the need arises. Let your Holiness send here a special representative, a just man and one above suspicion, and he will be promptly and fully informed by the whole city. As for myself, I am ready to amend in all things and in all places, and to retract publicly all my errors. If your Holiness will deign to point out what I am to retract in my writings and words, I shall hasten to obey; for now and always, as I have frequently written and said, I submit my person, my words, and my writings to the correction of the Holy Roman Church and of your Holiness, to whom I commend myself and my brethren. Prostrate at your feet,

Your Holiness's son and servant.

In consequence of the papal letter, Savonarola was declared suspended from preaching, while he awaited the determination of his case by the Vicar General of the Lombard Congregation. The

reader is left to judge how far the surmise is correct that a religious pretext was used for picking a political quarrel, for striking a blow at the Florentine Republic. "It was the Pope's desire to reunite the said Congregation of Tuscany (St. Mark's) with the old and general Congregation of Lombardy, in order to remove the Friar from the City of Florence and to annul the Congregation of his followers and adherents; and all this had been brought about by the adversaries of the present government, and more especially by those who hoped that the city would turn in favor of the League and the Medici." These significant words are quoted from the fair-minded Nardi[1] a contemporary Florentine, whose history was written in an impartial spirit. Beyond doubt, had the plan been consummated, Savonarola could have been dismissed from Florence and from Tuscany by the ordinary process of an assignation to a Lombard convent.

Complementary to the papal Brief addressed to St. Mark's, we append a translation of the Brief forwarded to Blessed Sebastian Maggi, the Vicar General of the Lombard Congregation: —

Alexander the Sixth, Pope, to his beloved son, Brother Sebastian Maggi, of the Order of Preachers, Vicar General of the Congregation of Lombardy:

Beloved Son, — Health and Apostolic blessing! Since many and various accounts have been brought to

us, reports that are daily renewed, concerning the novel doctrines and scandalous preaching of Brother Jerome Savonarola of Ferrara, a member of your Order, and now resident at Florence, we have been deeply moved and disturbed in mind; and considering that such things, altogether foreign to our religion and to human reason, require a serious and exact examination, lest such innovations as he has introduced both in speech and in his writings, breed scandal to the Christian people, and endanger their salvation, as well as his own, and wishing, according to our pastoral office, to make wholesome provision in this emergency, we admonished him, by letter formerly sent, that he should come to us, so that by word of mouth we might learn from him the cause and truth of those things which he had set before his people in preaching and writing.

But he refused to come, and therefore it is presumed that he walks not according to the law of God, which commands obedience and humility.[1] For this reason, and that such an error may not pass unchecked, through connivance and negligence, especially in our day, and having special confidence in your sincerity and virtue, we commission you by this letter, and command you, that immediately on its receipt, by our Apostolic authority, in virtue of holy obedience, and under penalty of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, you will summon the said Jerome, warning him and requiring him to appear personally before you within a given

[1] Though this statement is in contradiction to the facts (see note, page 16) the reader need not ascribe the want of truth to Alexander. It is probable that he was not familiar with the details of the Briefs drawn by secretaries, and sometimes inspired by enemies of the Friar.

time, which you will determine, and with all sincerity and truth to give you a complete explanation of his sermons and published works.

We grant to you full authority and power to institute a process, to judge and decide this case, and the faculty, as justice and right may require, and according to your Order's law and rule, to determine what shall be done, so that you may punish him, or you may refer the matter to the Apostolic See.

We have also written another Brief to the same Jerome and to the Convent of St. Mark, Florence, of which we enclose to you a copy, so that you may have full knowledge of its tenor ; and for greater caution and certainty, we transmit to you a second draft, which you can transfer to the said Jerome and his community. Thus, through you, we shall have more satisfactory information as to his answer and obedience, for, according to the terms of the Brief mentioned, we have united the monasteries of St. Mark and St. Dominic of your Order to your Congregation of Lombardy, so that you can in future accept them and exercise care over them. Endeavor, therefore, so to conduct yourself in this affair that we may have the satisfaction of knowing that the case of the aforesaid Brother Jerome, which is so full of novelty and scandal, has been committed to a man of true religion who fears God.[1]

Given, etc., September 9, 1495.

[1] The original Latin text is given in Luotto: Appendix. He was the first to publish this Brief. It is a matter of regret that no letters of the B. Sebastian Maggi are available; we can judge, therefore, only from his well known respect and even veneration for Savonarola, and from the fact that the latter resumed his office and soon received proof of the pontifical

During this trying period, Savonarola behaved prudently; he keenly felt the sore dilemma in which he had been placed,— that of a good man put in the wrong, by the abused instrumentality of religion, through calumny and persecution; but his spirit was praiseworthy. We may judge it from a letter written on the day following his communication to the Pope. It was addressed to an unknown Dominican in Rome, probably Father Niccolo, who lived with the Cardinal Protector of the Order.[1] It was dated September 15. We give the full text: [2] —

Reverend Father in Christ, — Health and peace in Christ Jesus!

All who wish to live piously in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. If, therefore, I would offer fleshpots

favor, in the Prato affair (see opening paragraph, page 50), that Sebastian's decision was favorable to his former subject, and that Savonarola remained in Florence by his authority. St. Mark's chronicle throws no light on this phase of our case, nor do the archives of the Dominican Convent, Bologna, furnish any help. Certain words of the Friar in the 19th sermon on Amos (Lent, 1496) confirm our opinion that B. Sebastian's judgment was in support of Savonarola; and we may infer that the holy Vicar of Lombardy rendered the Prior of St. Mark notable service at Rome. Gherardi (141–143) gives letters from Becchi which also suggest a favorable conclusion to the work of B. Sebastian. This is a notable feature, the value of which we desire the reader to recognize. The fact that Savonarola had expressed his doubt as to the fairness of placing his case in Sebastian's hands only emphasizes the issue as arranged and effected by the latter.

[1] Marchese: Documenti, p. 152.

[2] The original Latin may be found in Perrens, pp. 356–359.

no one would molest me, but because I give the bread that does not fail, striving each day to free the needy from the hands of the wicked, all curse me. I have heard that certain pharisees have gone and entered into a scheme with Herodians (that is, some religious and Florentine citizens, who cannot bear the name of peace), and plotting against me, have suggested to the Pope many falsehoods, provoking him against me. Urged by them His Holiness has sent to us a Brief which has greatly disturbed the entire community, and which, in almost all respects, contains many evident untruths.

I believe that if His Holiness were aware of these facts, he would annul the Brief and punish the perpetrators of fraud. Since it is not only public, but notorious here in Florence that I have neither said nor done the things of which I am accused, will not the people say, when they learn the contents of this Brief, that Rome persecutes the innocent and just? And this certainly will be a great disgrace to those prelates and to the Roman people.[1]

We have written to His Holiness, and I enclose to your Paternity a copy of the letter, earnestly entreating you to speak to the most Reverend Protector of the Order, that he will plead our cause with the Sovereign Pontiff, and that the just may not be oppressed. I could mention certain religious and laymen who are at the bottom of this trouble, and I marvel how they can dare so treat me, after the great benefits I have conferred on their country. Yet not I, but the grace of

[1] Savonarola invariably ascribes his troubles, not to the Pope, but to others who deceived His Holiness.

God in me ! And further, these men should remember that I could put their heads in danger, and their families if I wished, since I know well that they are striking at the Republic.

But I wish to render them good for evil, as the Gospel commands, and to pray for them. I fear, however, that the unexpected may happen to them, and that they will fall into the pit which they have dug for others, because among the people there are strange rumors concerning them. I write these things so that it may be made known to them that there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed. While these accomplices were discussing their plots, they were secretly watched by others who have reported the proceedings through the city. They even spoke about your Paternity in a manner which has caused us no little surprise, but I count on our old friendship, and so I resolved to let you know, that you might take steps to remedy the evil.

I also send my answer, which is exhaustive, to D Felino, so that he may know how unjust is the proceeding against us. I ask your Paternity to join him in defence of our innocence. But if this avails not, I am ready, for the sake of the Lord Jesus, to bear all that may happen ; for in patience I await His tribunal. I know, I am certain, that they have attacked us without cause, yea, that they stone me because of good works. But I fear them not, nor, by the grace of God, do I fear their sword, for it is sufficient for me that a good conscience and the grace of God sustain me before the Lord.

But the time will come when God will reveal the

hidden things of darkness, and then each one will have his due. Were I now alone concerned, I would laugh at the plots against me, nor would I attempt any defence, because, as Pope Gelasius wrote, "Whoever receives a just penalty, let him put away his wrong and error, and it will be blotted out; but if it be unjust he ought to disregard it, insomuch as, before God and the Church, an unjust decree binds no one. And, therefore, from such a sentence one ought not to desire absolution, seeing that he is in no manner bound." And St. Augustine: "What matters it if evil conscience does not erase our name from the book of life?" But I know the root of all these plots. I know that they are devised by wicked men, in league with certain Italian rulers, who seek to usurp a tyrannical rule; and such men desire to kill me, considering me an impediment to their plans. Thus at almost every corner snares are set that my removal from the city may be effected. Hence it is that I may not leave the convent without a guard.

As yet the reform of the city is incomplete; so likewise is that of our Congregation, and I feel certain, as all admit and as prudent and good men advise, that my departure at this time would mean the overthrow of the Government and the destruction of our convent. In this view, they cannot see how I can conscientiously leave the city. Certainly it seems to me that if His Holiness realized the situation he would not order me to go.

Since, therefore, the intention of a superior must be regarded, rather than his words, and since all I have written to you is true, I ask your opinion as to what I should do, before God. I entreat your Paternity to show

that you are not allied with those who have planned against us; to defend the innocent before the most Reverend Protector of the Order, lest many scandals arise in this city, from which bloodshed might also follow.

Nevertheless, if I cannot otherwise save my conscience than by obeying the Brief, certainly I will obey, though the ruin of the whole world should be the result; for I do not wish to sin in this matter in any manner, even venially. But in this affair I have considered that it is well, as the doctors teach, to wait.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.[1]

News of the impending change in the jurisdiction of St. Mark's was soon spread through Florence. On the 17th of the same month, September, the Signory addressed a beautiful letter to the Pope, highly extolling the merits of the Friar and the generous benefits he had conferred on the city, for the welfare of religion. They besought Alexander not to press the matter, to leave St. Mark's and St. Dominic's, Fiesole, independent, and not to withdraw from Florence the blessing of Savonarola's presence and work, for his very name was in benediction with the people.[2]

In the meantime his hope was gratified by a cheering word from members of the Order in Rome, that the papal Brief commanding and de-

[1] What answer Savonarola received, we know not. There is no letter to him preserved that would apply.

[2] Villari, ii., Appendix, p. li.

creeing the reunion with Lombardy would be revoked. On October 26, he told the ambassador of Ferrara that from day to day he expected a new Brief, and that his friends in Rome had written to him that all would be well, as he had been vindicated and justified in the eyes of the Holy Father.[1] But his expectations were not as yet to be realized. On the contrary, he subsequently received a third Brief, dated October 16.

The full text of the Pope's third letter is as follows:[2] —

Beloved Son, — Health and Apostolic blessing!

Although we have more fully explained to you, by another Brief, our great displeasure because of the disturbances among the Florentine people especially arising from your preaching, inasmuch as you, instead of confining yourself to the work of extirpating vice and cultivating virtue, have devoted your sermons to predictions of future events, affirming that you had, as a special light from God, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and because such things frequently lead simple men from the way of salvation and of obedience to the Holy Roman Church (on account of which you should have striven in your preaching for peace and union, and not for the announcement of your divinations which the people call prophecies; you should have considered that the present condition of affairs is strongly

[1] Cappelli, pp. 68, 69.

[2] The Latin text with correct date and amendments is given by Gherardi, p. 390. Quetif (p. 134) also prints the letter, but with erroneous date.

averse to such doctrine as you set forth, which of itself would be sufficient to raise discord where perfect peace had been, and how much more where dissensions and factions abound), — we are moved, therefore, because of the danger to many souls, because of our desire for the tranquillity of the Florentines, and that we may be faithful to our pastoral office, to write to you again.

It was not without mature deliberation that we decided to call you to Rome, that you might clear yourself of the charges made against you (for if they were true they could not be allowed to pass with impunity); but, learning from several of our venerable brethren, Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, and from your own letter and messengers, that you were ready to submit yourself, in your words and works, to the correction of the Holy Roman Church (which is the duty of every good Christian and religious), we were greatly rejoiced, and began to persuade ourselves that you had preached such things, not from any evil purpose, but through a kind of simplicity and out of zeal for cultivating the vineyard of the Lord, although experience might teach us the contrary.

Consequently, lest we should seem entirely negligent in matters which suffer no carelessness, we resolved to write to you this letter, in answer to yours. And therefore we command you, in virtue of holy obedience, to abstain altogether from preaching, whether public or private, so that you cannot be charged with having left the pulpit only to resort to private meetings.

And this condition you will faithfully observe, till you are able, securely, conveniently, in honor as becomes a religious (and not guarded, as we understand

by soldiers), to come and confer with us, when we shall receive you with paternal gladness; or till we shall have considered more maturely what our decision for the future will be. It may be that we shall send some suitable and honorable man to confer with you.

If you do as we hope you will, we shall then suspend the Brief which we have written concerning you, with all the conditions contained therein, so that you may enjoy peace of conscience.

Given, etc., October 16, 1495.

On October 26, this Brief was received in Florence, and Savonarola at once submitted to the suspension from preaching, and remained in the seclusion of St. Mark's, while Father Dominic occupied the pulpit of the Cathedral during Advent.[1]

The Prior was well aware of the political complications that rendered his position more delicate; he knew that, under political cover, some of his enemies sought to destroy the work of spiritual reformation. Nevertheless a purely religious question was the seeming issue, but without any specific charge of false doctrine that he could directly meet. He accepted the prohibition imposed by the Pontiff and bore the ignominy of an accusation easily made, and with difficulty refuted, — a general charge of dangerous and false teaching.

[1] Luotto, 484. Father Bayonne (p. 87) says that Savonarola addressed a written answer to the Pope, on receipt of the Brief of October 16, but Father Ferretti assures me that he knows of no such letter.

But his friends were not passive. The Signory were unflagging in their efforts to secure permission for him to resume his preaching. Becchi, their envoy in Rome, was instructed to secure this favor either by Brief or by a *vivæ vocis* (verbal) concession.[1] The Cardinal of Naples, Protector of the Dominican Order, was urged in most earnest letters to prevail on His Holiness to grant to Florence, as a crowning act of gracious indulgence, the privilege and opportunity of again hearing Savonarola, who was described by the Signory as a man of rare virtues, of extraordinarily fruitful labors, and as a singular benefactor of the Republic. They stigmatized the malice of his enemies, and deplored the deception that had been put upon the Sovereign Pontiff by wicked men slandering a true servant of God.[2]

For a long time the Pope continued inflexible. Though his Briefs seem based on questions of doctrine, the correspondence of ambassadors would indicate that politics were the main spring. For instance, the Florentine envoy wrote, on December 28, that Alexander was irritated against the Republic because Florence would not join the League, and that he regarded the Florentines "as if they had given up the Holy Sepulchre into the hands of the infidels."[3]

[1] Gherardi, p. 132.

[2] Letters of Nov. 13 and 17, 1495, and of Jan. 28 and Feb. 5, 1496. See Gherardi, pp. 130–133.

[3] Bayonne, p. 87.

1496.

With the opening of the New Year, 1496, a remarkable occurrence took place. The Dominican Convent of Prato, which had been sadly in need of reform, was placed by Alexander's authority, under the jurisdiction of Savonarola as Vicar of St. Mark's Congregation.[1] This pontifical action was not only an expression of high regard and confidence, but by recognizing Savonarola as Vicar, practically annulled the preceding Brief, which had discontinued the independent Congregation of Tuscany.[2] Thus the condition of administration and jurisdiction prevailing before Alexander had summoned Savonarola to Rome was restored.

It was probably at this time that, through Father Louis of Ferrara, Procurator General of the Order, the offer of a Cardinal's hat was made to the Friar, if he would change his method of preaching.[3] His answer is well known. Hearing

[1] For all the documents, see Gherardi, pp. 69–84.

[2] The pontifical letter of Oct. 16, 1495 had already suspended this Brief of incorporation, as Savonarola had complied with the conditions. The Brief of Nov. 7, 1496, not only does not regard St. Mark's as then attached to Lombardy, but names, in detail, the houses of that jurisdiction which, with St. Mark's and other communities, were to form a new province. From this we rightly infer that the Pontiff had quashed his order of Sept. 8, 1495, and that Savonarola's power as Vicar was recognized on the occasion of the Prato reform.

[3] Burlamacchi, p. 551.

it, Alexander remarked: "That man is perhaps a great servant of God. Speak no more to me about him, either good or ill."[1]

Among the brethren selected to renew the community at Prato was Father Antony d'Ollandia, who, as prior, at once requested that a preacher be sent to him. Savonarola answered that *if the Sovereign Pontiff permitted him to speak*, he would send them Father Dominic, who had been held in reserve for Florence, because of his own enforced silence. And that their hopes might be realized he besought special prayers.[2]

We emphasize this fact, illustrating, as it does, Savonarola's submission and obedience. On February 11, the Signory *unanimously* decreed that "the Venerable Prior, Friar Jerome Savonarola should resume his preaching during Lent, or before, in the Cathedral, or in any other church of the City."[3] Savonarola refused, until he should

[1] Bayonne, p. 90.

[2] Gherardi (p. 85) gives this letter, in Latin, dated the Feast of the Purification. In it Savonarola tells Father Antony that the special prayers of the Community of St. Mark's, begging for the desired relief, will include the singing of the *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, each morning; of the *Ave Regina* and the *Recordare Virgo Mater*, each evening; and the recitation of the Seven Penitential Psalms, after Complin. He directs that the Community of Prato shall offer the same devotions, adding: "I believe that if we pray fervently we shall obtain this favor from God, and that there will be great fruit for souls."

The piety of the Friar, and his marked veneration for our Lady are here beautifully evidenced.

[3] Gherardi, p. 133.

receive the Pope's permission. The Signory had expected this difficulty, and fortunately were able to meet it in a satisfactory way. Their persistent efforts had finally prevailed. The Cardinals of Naples and Perugia had persuaded the Pope to relent in his opposition to the Friar, and Alexander granted a verbal permission for Savonarola to resume his preaching.[1]

[1] Nardi, L. ii., p. 56; Andrea Bernardi, also a contemporary, in his "Cronica Forlivese" quoted by the *Quarto Centenario*, which discusses this point very clearly, pp. 140, 141; Marchese: "San Marco," p. 118, and "Documenti," p. 151; Villari, ii. 47; Bayonne, p. 88; Del Lungo, Letter v., p. 9; Gherardi, pp. 129–143, gives a series of Becchi's letters, though none are absolutely satisfactory; Luotto, pp. 487–497, who is conclusive and convincing. Against these competent authorities, men of scrupulously careful investigation, Pastor, who made no original study of the Friar, sets the names of Cipolla, Cosci, and Perrens. Let us judge their value. Cipolla's work, "Le Signorie Italiane dal 1300 al 1530" (Milano, 1881), as its name indicates, does not deal particularly with Savonarola. In passing, Cipolla touches the career of the Friar, and (p. 735) states that he resumed his preaching without the consent of the Pope. This opinion, he has, however, revised. I am informed by Father Ferretti that a change in Cipolla's work, on this point, will follow, in a later edition, the author's conviction that Luotto, to whose arguments and testimonies he has yielded, was right.

As to Cosci's writings (embodied in the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, tom. iv., D. V. e vi., del 1879, a pagine 282 e 429), it is sufficient to remark that, while dissenting from the consensus of historians in favor of the permission, he offers no convincing argument, cites no determining authority in support of his own statement; rather he expresses himself as disposed to admit that the faculty was granted by the Pope. In other words, Cosci gives no authority to Pastor. Perrens, in his "Life of Savonarola" (p. 158), seems to allow that the Friar had the papal license to resume his preaching, but he does not discuss the

On February 16, he announced that, having received the pontifical authorization, he would

question. Pastor refers to him as against it, in his "History of Florence," ii. 205. I have consulted the passage. The Frenchman is clear in his statement, but it is notable that he leans chiefly on Cosci, a broken reed, as we have seen. Moreover, Perrens's bias is apparent, and as he fails to support his positive dictum by any contemporary evidence, and as he wrote, moreover, in ignorance of the latest testimonies brought to light, prudent and fair-minded readers will not be influenced by his peremptory declaration, against the weight of authority cited in favor of the Friar, as well as against the Friar's own reputation for sincerity and truth.

Our readers who consider these facts and references will recognize that neither Cosci nor Perrens nor both of them can give Pastor any authority. They will also rightly estimate the value of Pastor's sneering conclusion that the religious, who found so many excuses for evading the commands of his supreme spiritual superior, was prompt to comply with the commands of a temporal authority in regard to ecclesiastical matters. ("History of the Popes," Eng. trans. vi. 11; and his "Zur Beurtheilung Savonarolas," p. 65.) In both works he quotes Cosci and Cipolla, and in the latter, Perrens. Had he availed of Luotto's study which he vainly attempted to answer, he should at least, have modified his reference to Cosci. On the German historian's added charge "that the Friar never ventured to maintain that any such permission had been granted" (History of the Popes, vi. 10), we remark: The letter (see Del Lungo) of Somenzi to the Duke of Milan, states the direct contrary; and unless Savonarola is to be accused of utter insincerity and falsehood we must take his positive word that he had received permission, with his former declaration that he would not preach unless the Pope consented. Nor has Pastor a right to demand any formal announcement to this effect in his sermons. To have awaited a gathering of the people in the church, and then to have informed them, was not only not necessary, for in talkative Florence news soon spread, and the throng that greeted the Friar in the Duomo was proof sufficient that they had heard the tidings of his restoration, but besides,

accede to the Signory's request. His Lenten sermons were extremely vigorous. The Pope was incensed, and freely expressed his indignation to Becchi, the Florentine envoy, because the Republic, supported by the Friar, would not join the League against the French; and he was even more vehement in an interview with Bishop Pandolfini, who had gone to Rome, as a special ambassador of the Florentines, to placate Alexander.[1]

Savonarola's energetic denunciations of the vices of Italian prelates and tyrants were skilfully used by the *Arrabbiati* and the Medici to stir up the neighboring princes against him. The scheming politicians were joined by the *Tepidi* and the

he neither could nor would have taken such a step, for till the people knew it was lawful for him to preach it was not lawful for them to hear. However, had Pastor not been content, before passing such a rigorous sentence, with second-hand authorities, had he consulted the Friar's sermons, he would have found positive evidence against himself, and positive evidence that the Friar did make public the fact that his preaching was licit. In the first discourse for that Lent, Savonarola refers to the mercy of God in his return to the pulpit, obtained through the prayers of the devout. And in the thirty-fifth of the series he is even more explicit.

Moreover, we find that shortly after Lent, he was formally delegated by the Master General, to confer the veil on certain nuns. In this document the Master General addresses him not only as Vicar General of St. Mark's Congregation, but further he employs the unusual and marked title of the "Venerable Father Jerome." See Gherardi, pp. 68, 69, for letter. Had Savonarola's Lenten discourses been delivered in defiance of the Pope, the head of the Dominican Order would not have so acted or written. But enough for our present purpose!

[1] Marchese: Documenti, pp. 149–151; Villari, ii. 91.

Compagnacci, who with exquisite irony and cynicism constituted themselves the champions of insulted (?) religion, and poured into the Roman Court a torrent of accusations against the fearless Friar. "Of all the infamous deeds which are told of the closing years of the fifteenth century, there is not one more characteristic nor worse than this, in which infamous calumny, fraud, impiety, contempt for everything sacred, and, above all, for the Vicar of Christ and of His Church, seem triumphant."[1]

Towards the end of Lent, the Pope ordered two Cardinals and two Bishops, with the General of the Dominicans and several masters in theology, to institute a judicial process against the Prior. He convoked a meeting of these ecclesiastics in his own palace on April 3. He declared to them that he was determined to punish Savonarola as *superstitious, disobedient to the Holy See, schismatical, and heretical.*[2] Through the entreaties of the Florentine ambassador the Bishop of Capaccio obtained a respite, and shortly afterwards the Pope expressed himself as satisfied with the case of Savonarola, because of the answers from the Signory, who had assured him of the Friar's good

[1] Luotto, p. 527.

[2] Bayonne, p. 89; Gherardi, 142; Perrens, p. 184; and nevertheless, as Becchi, the Florentine envoy, informed his Government, the chief charge against Savonarola was that *he was the cause of all the miseries of Piero de' Medici.* His letter (Italian) is published by Perrens, pp. 361, 362.

dispositions. So Becchi wrote to "The Ten" on April 4.[1]

But by plots and slanders, which in that age disputed with poison and dagger a place of eminence in Italian politics, the campaign against Savonarola was continued during the summer. Contemporary political events, the sermons of the Friar, and those of his rivals would have to be presented in detail to bring this fact out vividly; suffice it to say that zeal for truth, for the welfare of Florence, and for the honor of the Church shine conspicuous in the life and words of the Prior of St. Mark's, and in noble contrast to the deportment and utterances of those opponents who skilfully wove a web for his ruin.[2] Even in his own Order he was not spared sharp comment and active hostility. During the early autumn the Pope had occasion to speak of Savonarola to a certain Father Francis Mei, afterwards Procurator General of the Dominican Order, who had succeeded Father Louis of Ferrara as visitor to some of the Tuscan convents in which grave disorders were prevalent. Father Mei had conceived a dislike for Savonarola, because the latter had revealed to him some secret fault, saying, "You lean upon a reed that will yet pierce your hand. One day

[1] Gherardi, pp. 142–144; Bayonne, p. 89.

[2] Luotto, p. 527, note. In chapter 32, this author draws a striking picture of the unhappy condition resulting from the plots of Savonarola's enemies.

you will go to Rome, and there you will fight against me."

He fulfilled the prophecy, for it was he who persuaded the Pope that the only way to overcome all resistance on the part of the Florentines would be to institute a new Congregation or Province, in which would be fused all the convents belonging to the Tuscan Congregation which included St. Mark's. By this means Savonarola, having been stripped of his dignity of Vicar General, would, at the close of his term of office as Prior of St. Mark's, be reduced to the rank of a simple religious. As such he could be sent from Florence by the Superior of the new Congregation, and then the city could be easily diverted from the French alliance.[1] This advice decided the Pope's action. The extraordinary, entirely unexpected, and hitherto unthought-of change was decreed by Alexander, who on November 7, signed the following Brief:[2] —

Beloved Sons, — Health and Apostolic blessing!

Being anxious for the reformation and increase of your holy Order, as is our duty, and as is most pleasing

[1] Bayonne, pp. 90, 91.

[2] Bullarium, iv., 124, 125. The Brief was addressed to the priors and communities of the sixteen convents which were to compose the new province: The Minerva and St. Sabina's, Rome; St. Mary ad Gradus, Viterbo; St. Mary of the Oak, near Viterbo; The Holy Spirit, Siena; St. Catherine, Pisa; St. Dominic, San Gemignano; St. Dominic, Pistoia; St. Dominic, Prato; St. Romain, Lucca; St. Agnes, Montepulciano; St. Dominic Perugia; St. Dominic, Corbara; St. Mary of the Rock; St. Dominic, Fiesole; and St. Mark, Florence.

to the great Creator, and advantageous to the piety of the devout faithful, we cheerfully undertake whatever may provide, usefully and profitably, under God, for the laudable preservation of rites, customs, and religious observance in all your houses, and for their more vigorous growth and prosperity.

Moved by this desire, and hoping that by forming a new Congregation out of the houses withdrawn from the Lombard Province, with those of . . .[1] to be known as the Tusco-Roman Province, and to be under its own Vicar, we have so arranged, trusting that from this fusion there will come great increase of piety and observance, to the advantage of these communities. The nearness to one another of these convents will enable the Vicar more easily to make his visitations, and the brethren, with less difficulty, to confer with him.

Of our own prompting, therefore, and not at the instance of any petition, of our own kindness and knowledge, we separate these convents from the Congregation of Lombardy and from the jurisdiction of its Vicar, nor by this do we wish that any loss or injury should accrue to these houses.

And by our Apostolic authority we also decree, for now and for all future time, that the said houses, as well as the others named, from the Roman and Tuscan provinces, are united in one Congregation of regular observance, to be known as the Tusco-Roman, immediately subject to a Vicar and the Master General of your

[1] See preceding foot-note. The houses that had been under Lombard jurisdiction were those of St. Sabina, St. Mary of the Oak, Pisa, Siena, San Gemignano.

Order. For this first time and for a period of two years, the Vicar shall be appointed by our venerable Brother, Oliver Caraffa, Bishop of Sabina, Cardinal of Naples, after consultation with our beloved son, your Master General. On the expiration of this term said Vicar will be considered absolved from office, at which time an election will be held according to the manner prescribed in your Constitutions for the election of a Provincial. . . .[1]

Moreover, we order and strictly command, in virtue of holy obedience, all the brethren belonging in any way to these houses to return at once, nor can any one leave this Tusco-Roman Congregation without the special permission of the Vicar. . . .[2]

We wish, moreover, and in virtue of holy obedience by this present letter we strictly command, under penalty of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, each and every one, no matter of what condition state, dignity, or grade, forbidding all concerned either to presume or dare, directly or indirectly, of themselves or by others, in any manner whatsoever, under any color or pretext, to contradict or impede this our letter. And should aught such be attempted, either knowingly or in ignorance, we here and now pronounce it null and void.

Thus the work of reform committed to the Congregation of St. Mark's, was, as the chronicler of

[1] Here follow certain instructions as to elections and vacancies.

[2] Here follows an enumeration of privileges to the newly-formed Congregation.

the Convent of Pisa wrote, "smothered in its cradle;"[1] while the community of St. Mark's, numbering almost three hundred (many of them young), chiefly recruited from the noblest families of Tuscany, and leading a life of strictest observance, were ordered to fraternize with men whom the chronicle of the Convent of Siena designates as "vagabond friars who were the refuse of the Order, utterly unworthy,[2] and who were to be gathered in from various parts of the country,"[3] to form a part of the new province.

Father Mei well knew that neither Savonarola nor his religious could justly approve such an arrangement, because perfect observance (for which they had suffered and had detached themselves from the Lombard Congregation) would have been impracticable, on account of the unruly elements thus brought together in the proposed fusion. This plotting religious politician argued, therefore, that Savonarola would thus become responsible for the expected resistance of his community, thereby arousing the Pope's anger, and, as disobedient, incurring the severe pontifical penalties. And so it happened that Savonarola was betrayed by one of his own, and after his death, to certain persons who complained of the cruel treatment inflicted on him, Alexander re-

[1] Luotto, p. 511.

[2] Mirandola, ii. 4, who refers to their houses as dens of robbers.

[3] Bayonne, p. 93.

plied, in the words of Pilate: "It was your nation and your high-priests who delivered him into my hands." [1]

On December 12, the new Vicar General, Father James of Sicily, was appointed, and to him Savonarola at once rendered obedience,[2] though he retained, as by right, his office of Prior of St. Mark's Convent (which was distinct from that of Vicar of St. Mark's Congregation), in which he had not been disturbed.

1497.

In March, 1497, Bracci, the special Florentine envoy who had been sent to Rome to negotiate the affair of the League against the French, reported an interview with the Pope, during which the latter promised the restoration of Pisa to the Republic, "if the Florentines would show themselves good Italians by renouncing the French alliance, and by ceasing to confide in the parable-making Friar." Alexander also complained that the Signory permitted Savonarola to revile him; [3]

[1] Bayonne, p. 95.

[2] Luotto, p. 514; Gherardi, p. 146; Burlamacchi, 580, who says that Father James, himself a man of sanctity, entertained a marked veneration for Savonarola.

[3] So the plotters had falsely declared to the Pope. It was also sought to excite irritation against the Friar in Florence, through the Florentine merchants in Rome who wrote appealingly to the Signory of the danger to their interests, by threatened reprisals on the part of the angry Pontiff, because of the

and added, "If the Friar refuses to obey the Brief commanding him to join the Tusco-Roman Congregation, I shall compel him by censures, and even by excommunication." [1]

The Florentines answered, through the proper office, that they were good Italians; recounted the great services of the Friar; denied that he had insulted His Holiness or mentioned any one by name in his sermons, and branded those who spoke against him as slanderers and opponents of the moral reform which Savonarola had wrought.[2] The *Arrabbiati*, the *Compagnacci*, all the enemies of good government and of public decency, rejoiced to see the Friar under the pontifical displeasure, and about to be "crushed," as he himself expressed it, "between the keys of Peter." [3]

The political hatred and the moral malignity of these unworthy men received help from a quarter

Republic's defence of Savonarola. See Gherardi (pp. 205, 206) for their letter (Italian) in full.

[1] We suggest that this declaration of the Pope indicates that he had not previously intended to excommunicate Savonarola, despite the terms of the Brief of May 13, 1497, which may have been surreptitiously inserted. The discrepancies and contradictions apparent in the various pontifical letters and the fact that forgeries had occurred at this time, perpetrated by unworthy secretaries, arouse the suspicion that the over-taxed Pope was not familiar with the contents of all the documents regarding the Prior of St. Mark's.

[2] Gherardi (pp. 148–160) gives the correspondence, including letters from Becchi, as well as instructions from the Florentine Department of State.

[3] Bayonne, p. 99.

not usually found in alliance with such forces. During Lent two Augustinian preachers used the pulpit as a political platform from which they reviled Savonarola. One spoke in Florence, the other in Rome. The latter was the well-known Mariano of Gennezzano, who had been condemned for his participation in Medicean plots, and dared not return to Florence, but who nursed in Rome, with the exiled and dissolute Piero, the chagrin of his defeat by Savonarola, till it became a furious passion of vindictiveness. Even in the Pope's presence he outraged the proprieties of the pulpit by demanding of the Holy Father that he should "cut off this *monster* from the Church." [1]

That Savonarola expected the fulmination of a censure, as the result of the political plots of his enemies and of the enemies of the Republic, who were unflagging in repeating their calumnies to the Pope, we can judge, in a special manner, from his own words. "Many declare," he said, "that the excommunication will come. Do you not know that they who seek usually find? Last year they did not succeed, but now I pray God that it may soon come. I fear it not, for I have done no wrong. Let it be borne in on the point of a spear; open the gates for it. Then I shall

[1] Nardi, l. ii., p. 58; Quetif, p. 224; Marchese: Scritti Vari, i. 225. Gentle and religious language, assuredly! It is not strange that the Pope did not approve such insolence, or that the Cardinals who were present expressed their marked displeasure.

answer it, in such manner that you will wonder at the multitude who will turn pale. In Rome one [1] fights against me, but religion is not his inspiration. They would excommunicate me because I have done good. Had I wished to be a flatterer, I would not now be in Florence, endangered, nor would I wear this patched cloak.[2] Thy Cross, O Lord, is my only ambition. For it I pray. Grant me, O Lord, that I may not die on my bed, but that I may shed my blood for Thee Who hast poured out all Thine for me."[3]

About the end of Lent a new calumniator took the field, — John Victor de Camerino, a theologian of some repute, who "exposed" what he called the false teaching of Savonarola. Having received as pay for his labor a measure of Florentine justice, first a prison and then banishment, he went to Rome, and there made common cause with Mariano. Both waited on the Pope, and urged him to strike the decisive blow. The Florentine ambassador endeavored to counteract their efforts by assuring Alexander that the two were not only calumniators of Savonarola, but enemies also of Florence, the interests of which His Holiness professed to have at heart.[4]

The conspiracy, represented at Rome by Piero

[1] Mariano, to whom Nardi, l. ii., pp. 62, 63, ascribes much of Savonarola's trouble.

[2] A reference to the offer of the Cardinalate.

[3] Sermon 22 on Ezechiel.

[4] Bayonne, p. 102; Gherardi, p. 158.

de' Medici, his brother the Cardinal, Cardinal Sforza, Mariano, and the exiled Mediceans, and at Florence by the *Arrabbiati* and the libertines, had been well planned.[1] These worthies had slandered their victim too viciously, the Pontiff they had too cunningly deceived, too persistently harassed and angered, to suffer defeat of their foul purpose. Savonarola was doomed.[2] As Becchi wrote to Florence, the affair had been so well arranged by the Friar's enemies that "the medicine took immediate effect," [3] — the conspirators' final appeal to the Pope to sign the long expected anathema meeting with success on May 13.[4] Previously to the reception in Florence of the sentence, and indeed before its despatch from Rome was known, "The Ten" or State Department, as we may freely designate this branch of the Republic's government, having been warned by Bracci, the special envoy at Rome, of the impending blow, addressed to the Pope a respectful protest and expostulation.[5] They declared that "Friar Jerome never pointed his reproaches at any one in particular, that his preaching had borne abundant fruit in the

[1] Nardi, pp. 62, 63; Gherardi, pp. 163, 166, 167.

[2] Burlamacchi (p. 551) says that the Pope had been brought to a mortal hatred of the Friar.

[3] Gherardi, p. 163.

[4] News of the Ascension Day outrage had reached Rome shortly before this, — with the usual calumnies, Savonarola the victim, being represented as the aggressor. See foot-note to his letter of May 8, page 70.

[5] Dated May 20.

city, both on account of his high reputation for virtue and for the excellence of his dogmatic and moral teaching. No one, therefore, can be surprised, if we deplore, by anticipation, aught that might be attempted against him because of calumnious charges, for we do not wish to be guilty of ingratitude, and we must bear witness to the truth."[1]

Alexander was so prejudiced or so completely deceived concerning Savonarola that when the Florentine representative submitted to His Holiness this protest of the Republic, he answered: "The Signory are unwilling to admit that the Friar has spoken evil against me, and I am not surprised at this, seeing their great devotion to him. I am as certain of the contrary as I am of being Pope. I have many witnesses worthy of belief, and it ought to be admitted that I have not acted without just cause. Besides, I await his reply to the Brief, and shall act afterwards as God may inspire me."[2]

Here we must retrace our steps for a few days, in order to resume the connected narrative, admonishing the reader that the Brief issued on May 13 did not reach Florence till June 18. As we have already stated, anticipations of the censure were prevalent in Florence. Painfully conscious as he was of the perilous condition of the times, Savonarola wished to prepare the people for the worst, that they might not be surprised when the inevi-

[1] Gherardi, pp. 163, 164. [2] Id., p. 165.

table blow should be struck. He rightly estimated the power of the movement against him, and decided, on May 8, five days before the date of the Brief of excommunication, and six weeks previously to its publication in Florence, to address the following letter to his disciples and friends :[1] —

Brother Jerome Savonarola, the unworthy servant of Jesus Christ, wishes grace, peace, and the consolation of the Holy Spirit, to all the elect of God and children of the Eternal Father :

Dearly Beloved, — Wishing to follow the example of our Saviour, Who often yielded to the mad and uncontrolled fury of the Scribes and Pharisees, we have ceased to preach, and we shall remain silent as long as it will please God. Knowing, however, that the demon, desiring not our bodies but our souls, continues to excite such persecutions, that, the preaching of the word of God having ceased,[2] he will stir up the tepid,[3] who will not fail to withdraw souls from the way of truth, and fearing that you may have allowed yourselves to be deceived, my solicitude for your salvation urges me to do by letter what I cannot do by word of mouth. Perhaps this will be a more useful method, being more general, since many may read this letter who could not hear the word.

I beseech you, then, dearly beloved, not to be dis-

[1] Quetif (pp. 170 *seq.*) gives the original Italian text.

[2] By prohibition of the Signory. Decree is given (Latin) by Villari, ii. xxxvi.

[3] Savonarola applied this word, in a general way, to the opponents of his reform.

turbed by the tribulations and persecutions which I suffer for you. Rather rejoice with me, because our Saviour has made us worthy to suffer for His love and for the sake of truth, for you well know that I have always told you of the persecutions we should have to bear, fighting as we do against a twofold power, a twofold wisdom, and a twofold malice. For these reasons you ought to be confirmed in the truth preached by us, seeing the fulfilment, successively, of the things which we have foretold. Believe me, the promised grace and consolation will yet come.

Read carefully the Scriptures and the history of the Church, and you will find that she has ever advanced under persecution. Hence, though small, almost as nothing in the beginning, the Church spread during the great persecutions, and after these she did not increase, but at times diminished in numbers and in merit. Now it seems that God wishes to renew and increase the Church, and therefore we must not wonder that persecutions begin again, through which she will be made perfect in every way. Reflect, moreover, on the goodness and benignity of our Saviour, Who sweetly leads us, not allowing great persecutions to come on us suddenly, for in the past He trained us to such, gradually.

At first, as you know, wicked men, by God's permission derided me; then they calumniated me; and finally, being convicted of falsehood in this, they strove by many crooked ways to have me excommunicated or interdicted without cause. Unable to accomplish this, they laid many plots against me, even attempting to assassinate me. And yet not a drop of blood has been

shed, because our Saviour, Who knows my weakness, does not allow me to be tempted above my strength. But as the tribulations increase by degrees, our Lord increases Faith and virtue, strengthening the soul to sustain greater trials. In this way persecutions seem much less to us, because, seeing that by them our constancy is not overcome, men wonder, and begin to think that we could not suffer such trials if there were not a better world beyond; and they are even moved to live well and to follow the way of truth. Thus the light will be spread by means of our tribulations, and the hopes of the enemies of the Cross of Christ will be disappointed. They wish to extinguish this light, but they will be the means of spreading it, for as a fire burns the better the more it is stirred up, so these persecutions, instead of diminishing or extinguishing the work begun by God, will rather increase it.

Great has been the mercy of God in choosing us to be sharers in this light of Faith, in which good Christians are never wanting, and because of which the evil-minded never cease to strive against them, following their father, the demon. These wicked men manifest their life in their speech and works when, as his ministers, with so much audacity, without fear or shame, they profane the very house of God, making jest and even blasphemy of Christ's words. Instead of following in the way of truth, they have done much evil; the praises of Christ they have turned into derision, making odious the word of God, opposing its efficacy, seeking vengeance on me, or my death (which God has thus far prevented), so that they may more freely sin and open a broader path to vice and licentiousness. In

fine, those men do what pagans or infidels would not do, for these hold their temples in the highest esteem, and severely punish insults to their gods.[1]

Reflect also that there are others who, while not openly joining with such wicked men, encourage them, urge them on in their evil way. And that you may be certain that I have pointed out to you the way of truth, observe the manner of life of our followers — in virtue, good works; and so we are persecuted only by the synagogue of Satan. For we live in a perverse generation, with those among whom you shine as stars in the darkness of the night. You must, therefore, follow our

[1] In this paragraph Savonarola particularly refers to the dreadful scene on the Feast of the Ascension, when the pulpit of the Duomo was defiled with unmentionable filth. His libertine enemies, worse, as Nardi writes, than Turks or Moors, dead to all sense of public decency, as well as of reverence for the house of God, had also draped the pulpit with the skin of an ass, and into the desk or table which the Friar, under the impulse of his eloquence, was accustomed to strike with his hand, the cruel and cowardly wretches had driven spikes whose points were inverted. Around the pulpit so foully dishonored, an armed band was gathered, ready to assassinate him even in the Cathedral! But he did not falter. He came bravely, and his loyal friends, men of decency and religion, stood willing to defend him to the death. The vicious *Arrabbiati* had secured control of the Signory, and on the pretext of this disturbance which their followers had caused, they interdicted all preaching. Hence Savonarola's statement in the beginning of this letter. Scenes of great disorder naturally followed in the city, all of which were a part of the skilfully laid plot, in which the infamous *Compagnacci* were the able co-operators of the more cunning but not less wicked *Arrabbiati*, for the overthrow of the Friar. For the shameful incident in the Cathedral, we refer our readers to Villari, ii. 181; Quetif, p. 150; Nardi, p. 63; and we ask them to give due weight to these sad facts at this critical juncture of Savonarola's career.

Saviour, His disciples and martyrs, who did not turn back on account of persecutions, but on the contrary were more confirmed in patience, in joy, by the truth, strengthening others in like manner by their example.

Be not ashamed of the Cross of Christ; yea, glory in it. Instead of looking for happiness here, we should be glad because we are persecuted by the agents of the devil. Now is the time of merit, dearly beloved, because the judgment of God always begins with His elect, whom He afflicts and tries in many ways, as gold is tested in the fire; and afterwards judgment will come upon the reprobate. Consider, therefore, that if God sends so many tribulations to His elect, how many more He will send to the reprobate, because His judgment of the elect is tempered with mercy, but His judgment of the reprobate will be without mercy. And be not surprised that God allows so much evil and impiety to pass unpunished at present, because greater anger could not be shown to the wicked than to allow them to prosper in their sins.

Moreover, know that God uses these instruments of Satan to exercise the good in the virtue of patience. For as He keeps a great multitude of demons in the air, and not in hell, in order to exercise His elect in the faith, so also He allows the reprobate to live and prosper, for the same reason. His severe judgment will come later, and will be eternal.

But chastened and mortified in this world, as were the Saints and Martyrs, whose sufferings we have not experienced, we shall not complain, as abandoned by God; rather shall our tribulations be our ground of hope for a great reward in Heaven, with God, as His

children for eternity. Let us rejoice, therefore, in the richness of our expected glory, accounting as nothing the sufferings of this life.

And wonder not, in an age so blinded, to find yourselves among the tepid. Was it not so in the time of the Apostles, who lived among scribes and pharisees, pagans and idolaters? Therefore arm yourselves against their malice, by faith, patience, prayer, persevering and increasing in godly living, for by these will our enemies be confounded and overcome.

Grieve not because the word of God is no longer preached to you, for you are deprived of this through the Divine permission, that you may realize the evil these men would do if they had the power. They have not faith, they are not Christians, for they have interdicted our Saviour's command to preach the gospel. While depriving the people of God's word, they have opened to them profane places, the works of the devil. However, pray that God may be pleased to renew the preaching of His word, for if the wicked wish to live as pagans, we must show ourselves as Christians, ready, as were the Apostles when forbidden to speak the Name of Jesus, to declare that God must be obeyed rather than man, and that every tribulation must be borne for the love of Him Who was crucified for our salvation.

I beseech you, then, through the bowels of the piety of Jesus Christ, that during this solemnity of the Holy Ghost, you will prepare for the most holy Communion, by a true confession of your sins and a purification of your hearts, so that the Eternal Father, through the merits of the Passion of our Saviour, may send to you the gifts of His Divine Spirit. Thus you will be

enabled to suffer, not only patiently but with joy, even greater tribulations, meriting the crown of everlasting life. Be cheerful, humble, chaste, sincere, upright, charitable, constant in prayer, free from all anger or hatred, defending the truth and showing the folly of men who are led by sin to their ruin.

And during this most sweet solemnity prepare your hearts for the coming of the Holy Ghost, invoking Him with faith, hope, and loving desire, so that by the gift of understanding He will teach you to know the invisible and eternal things; by the gift of knowledge He will bring you to despise earthly things which pass in a moment; by the gift of counsel He will direct you in the way of truth and justice; by the gift of piety He will make you pious and gentle towards your neighbor, especially towards the miserable and even more so towards sinners (compassionating their blindness, and exciting yourselves to pray more fervently for your enemies); by the gift of fortitude that He will make you strong to bear with joy, for His love and for the truth, all tribulations; and by the gift of fear that He will preserve you in the right way, in all humility and subjection, in true joy, neither desiring nor fearing aught in this world, knowing that it shall pass quickly away.

And may you so continue that you will merit to rejoice with God our Saviour, and with the blessed, possessing that which eye hath not seen nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the glory that God has promised to those who love Him. The grace of the Father, the peace of the Son and the consolation of the Holy Spirit be with you all forever! Amen.

Up to May 22, no news had come to Florence of the issue of the Brief of excommunication. Ignorant therefore of the turn affairs had taken, Savonarola wrote on that day the following touching letter:[1] —

Most Holy Father, — I prostrate myself at the feet of your Holiness. Why is my Lord angry with his servant, or what is the wrong that I have done? If the sons of iniquity have spoken falsely of me, why does not my Lord inquire of his servant, and hear his account before believing them? It is a difficult thing to persuade a mind already prejudiced.

"Many dogs have encompassed me; the assembly of the wicked has enclosed me, and they say: 'Behold, his God cannot help him or save him.'" Your Holiness holds the place of God on earth, and they accuse me of treason towards you, saying that I do not cease to reproach you and to assail you; and in many ways they distort and sacrilegiously pervert the meaning of my words.

The same thing was done two years ago, but thousands who heard me can bear witness to my innocence as well as to my own words, faithfully reported at the time, and printed and scattered abroad. Let these be brought forward, read, and examined, that it may be seen if in them there is anything offensive to your Holiness, as has been so often falsely asserted. Is it likely that I would

[1] Quetif (p. 125) gives the Latin text. Owing to a confusion of dates and a groundless presumption that the Brief of May 13 had reached Florence a few days after its issue, this letter of Savonarola has been erroneously regarded as an answer to the Pope.

say one thing and write another, and so lay myself open to the charge of flagrant contradiction? What could be the motive or benefit of such a line of conduct? It would be folly. I only wonder that your Holiness does not see their wickedness and madness. As for the great and renowned preacher,[1] he must have little shame or honesty to accuse an innocent man of the very crime of which he is guilty. His public speeches cannot be denied. Numerous witnesses have heard him furiously attacking your Holiness, and lest I might be accused of falsehood, I could, if necessary, produce legal proof. But I have not forgotten that his insolence has already been silenced and condemned, since it is not lawful to calumniate any one, no matter how lowly he may be, and much less one who is the Ruler and Pastor of all. Who is so senseless as to be ignorant of this?

Thanks to God, I am not so abandoned, so utterly forgetful of my duty. To the teaching of the Roman Church I have ever been faithful; to her correction I have ever submitted myself, and shall again submit myself whenever I may be summoned. And this is what I have always taught, and shall continue to teach with all my strength, at the same time doing my best to rouse men to sorrow for sin and to an amendment of life by awakening their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, a faith almost extinct in many hearts. The work which I hope soon to issue, on "The Triumph of the Cross" will be a witness to my faith. From it will be seen whether I teach heresy, or in any way am opposed to the Catholic Church, which God forbid!

[1] Mariano of Gennezzano, already mentioned, page 63.

Will your Holiness, therefore, turn a deaf ear to those envious and lying tongues, and believe only what has been examined and proved, since many of their falsehoods have already been detected and exposed? But if all human help fail me, and the wickedness of these impious men gain the day, I shall still hope in God, and by His help shall manifest their evil to the world, so that at the last moment they may, perhaps, repent of their bad purposes. I most humbly commend myself to your Holiness.

Your Holiness's humble son and servant.

When this letter arrived in Rome, though the Brief of excommunication had been despatched, the Pope was in a relenting mood, even favorably disposed towards the Friar, whose cause the Cardinals of Naples and Perugia and the Bishop of Capaccio had pleaded earnestly and with seeming success. Savonarola's appeal to the Pope produced an excellent impression.[1] To the Cardinal of Naples, Protector of the Dominican Order, Alexander said that he regretted having sent the Brief by an avowed enemy of the Friar; and he would probably have withdrawn it, had he not supposed that it was already published.

[1] Gherardi, pp. 167, 168. On May 23 and 24 respectively Savonarola also wrote to the Chancellor of the Duke of Ferrara, and to Madame Angiola Sforza d' Este, in a spirit of tender and reverent piety betokening the man of God over whom hung the shadow of the cross. Gherardi (pp. 279–281, 285, 286) gives the Italian text. Father Bayonne (p. 106) states that Savonarola also wrote at this time to the Cardinal of Perugia; but Father Ferretti informs me that he has no knowledge of such a communication.

Having presented the important facts bearing on the subject, we now give the text of the Brief, on the correct understanding of which the proper solution of the Prior's case depends: [1] —

Alexander the Sixth, Pope.

Beloved Sons, — Health and Apostolic blessing! From many men, both lay and ecclesiastic, all learned and worthy of credence, and at various times, we have heard that a certain Friar Jerome Savonarola, from Ferrara, of the Order of Preachers, and at present, as it is said, Vicar of St. Mark's, Florence, has sown certain pernicious doctrine in that city, to the scandal, loss, and destruction of unsuspecting souls redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ; and this, assuredly, has occasioned us displeasure of soul. But, hoping that when his error was made known to him, he would soon withdraw from the dangerous path, and return, in true simplicity of heart and with becoming humility and obedience, to Christ and His Holy Church, we commanded the said Friar Jerome, by a Brief, and in virtue of holy obedience, to come to us and justify himself regarding certain errors alleged against him. We also commanded him entirely to suspend his preaching, but he would not obey. However, moved by kind consideration for him, and treating him more gently than, perhaps, the affair demanded, we accepted some excuses which he offered; [2] we also bore with his disobedience in continuing to preach, contrary to our

[1] The Brief was addressed to the Benedictines, Franciscans, and Servites of Florence. Villari (II, xxxix) gives the Latin text, as does Perrens, pp. 362–364.

[2] These words prove that the Friar was not disobedient.

aforesaid prohibition, hoping that our clemency would turn him to the right path of obedience.[1]

But it happened otherwise, for he persisted in his obstinacy. Wherefore, by another Brief (dated November 7, 1496, the fifth year of our pontificate), we ordered him, in virtue of holy obedience and under penalty of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, to be incurred *ipso facto*, to obey in uniting the Convent of St. Mark, Florence, to a certain new Congregation called the Tusco-Roman Province, by us lately formed and instituted.[2] This he in no way performed; nor was he willing, in any manner, to obey our letter, disregarding the ecclesiastical censure which he thus incurred by this very fact, and under which, with damnable pertinacity, he still lies. Wishing, therefore, to apply such opportune remedies as the welfare of souls requires, to which we are bound by our pastoral office, that their blood may not be demanded of us at the day of judgment, we command you, in virtue of holy obedience and under penalty of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, that in your churches, on feast days, when there will be a congregation of the people, you will

[1] Consult text and foot-note, p. 16, for proof of the Friar's good faith and obedience.

[2] The reader is here referred to the Brief of November 7, 1496, in which the pontifical mandate forbade any one to impede or hinder his letter regarding the Congregation newly formed, of which by His Holiness's authority and precept St. Mark's was then constituted a portion. Savonarola, therefore, had received no command to do what the papal power had already accomplished. The contradictions evident in different Briefs concerning Savonarola point to the work of the Friar's enemies unscrupulously deceiving the Pope, and varying their mode of attack, as behooved slanderers who, like the wretched men called against our Blessed Lord, could not agree in their lies.

pronounce and declare the said Friar Jerome excommunicate, and that all shall hold and consider him as excommunicate because he would not obey our Apostolic admonitions and precepts.

Under like penalty of excommunication you will warn all, of both sexes, clerics or laity, priests or religious, of whatever order or grade or ecclesiastical dignity, that they must entirely avoid the said Friar Jerome as one excommunicate and suspected of heresy; nor may they hold speech or converse with him; nor may they listen to his preaching which we have interdicted, or in any other manner hear him; nor may they assist him or show him any kind of favor, or go to places where he may be or to the convent in which he lives.

We command you also, and each one individually, to obey and assist our beloved son and intimate commissary, John Victor de Camerino, Professor of Theology, in what we have commissioned and ordered him to do against the said Friar Jerome, in so far as he may call upon you.

Given, etc., May 13, 1497.

The commissary, an avowed enemy [1] of the Friar, undertook to carry the important document to Florence. Mindful, however, of his experience in that city, and not aware that the *Arrabbiati* had secured a majority in the Signory, he prudently stopped at Siena, whence on June 16 he wrote to Florence, asking the Republic's safe-conduct, to enable him to fulfil the Sovereign Pontiff's commission. Before the receipt of an answer, he de-

[1] Nardi, p. 64.

cided on a different line of action. He wrote to the Florentine clergy, ordering them to publish the Brief without delay.[1]

Through respect for the canonical conditions which they considered unfulfilled, some of the clergy declined to obey him.[2] Others, however, were more compliant, and the terrible tidings were known in Florence, on June 18, that the Friar had been declared excommunicate.[3] On the following day, Savonarola issued an address to the faithful, and at once withdrew from all public ecclesiastical functions through respect for the Brief and for fear of scandal. We give the full text of this letter to the people:[4] —

"To all Christians and the Elect of God, Brother Jerome Savonarola addresses himself in charity, desir-

[1] Gherardi, pp. 168, 169.

[2] The Brief was signed by the unfortunate Archbishop of Cosenza, as secretary. Four months later, on the denunciation of the Spanish sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella, he was confined to the Castle of St. Angelo, as a forger of papal Briefs. (Cappelli, p. 96.) How far he may have sinned in the case of Savonarola, it is not necessary to consider. After ten months of confinement, death released him.

[3] Nardi (p. 64) tells us that as soon as the tidings of the excommunication had spread, all kinds of villainous and libellous publications began to appear against the humiliated Prior; and the persecution went so far that the Franciscans, Augustinians, and other friars protested to the Signory that if *any of the Dominicans of St. Mark's, or of St. Dominic's, Fiesole,* took part in the procession on St. John's day, they would decline to walk. Savonarola's sons showed their Christian forbearance and dread of scandal by remaining in their convents on the great feast of Florence's Patron!

[4] Quetif (p. 185 *seq.*) gives the original Italian.

ing their salvation, their joy in tribulation, and as a servant of Jesus Christ, sent by Him to Florence to announce the great scourge that is to come upon Italy and particularly on Rome, and that will fall, moreover on the whole world, in order that His elect may be prepared for such great tribulations, and on this account may realize the great anger of God, Who is pleased in this way to root out deplorable abuses, and to purify His Church and the world.

May His goodness be always blessed, and may it be granted to the minister of this truth, for which I willingly suffer many persecutions, and struggle night and day, if it be God's will that the knowledge of this prophecy may be spread among all Christian people and in every part of the world, so that no one may have any excuse for his errors; so that the minds of those who deign to read of this renovation in the Church, as well as among infidels, may be disposed to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit which is the form of this renewal.

Bad men, reserved in this world for the persecution of the just, thinking to extinguish this truth and to destroy the prophecies, only fulfil them. So the brothers of Joseph believed that by selling him to the Madianites he could not become their lord, and yet this very selling fulfilled the prophecy. Herod, believing that he was destroying the prophecy of Christ by slaughtering the infants, fulfilled the prophecies of Jeremiah and Osee. The Jews, by persecuting and afterwards crucifying our Lord, fulfilled all the prophecies written of Him. The persecutions of the Apostles and the Martyrs have fulfilled the prophecies of both the Old Testament and the New.

Thus at the present time the prophecies announced by me are being accomplished, among which you can see expressly fulfilled that of the excommunication, about which, many years before, when no one thought of it, I preached to you many times, saying that we had to combat against a double power and wisdom and wickedness. From this and from many others which with your own eyes you already see fulfilled, you are able to believe that all those not yet fulfilled will be realized, and that God will free us from every danger, and will, in the end, give us a glorious victory.

Remember that I have told you how a great benefit would be rewarded by great ingratitude, and that for such great labors I expected nothing from Florence but tribulation; and that to Rome [1] and the other adversaries of the truth, nothing was wanting to fill the sack [2] but the persecution of the servants of Christ. But because the tepid do not cease to go about, deceiving simple women, by whatever means will serve their own ends, continuing to speak evil and to persecute the good and truth itself, I desire that you be not thereby deceived, and that you abandon not the way of truth.

Remember our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Saints. Bear in mind what I told you of St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, St. Hilary, and many others who have suffered greater persecutions than have fallen to our lot. Do not believe, then, dearly beloved, that such excommunications have any

[1] By "Rome" Savonarola means his enemies at the Roman Court, and the prelates whose lives were scandalous.

[2] Their cup of iniquity.

weight, either with God or in the Church. They have been fulminated on the false suggestions of men who desire to do evil, to act against God and the truth. Nevertheless, being unable to allege a just cause for excommunicating me, they have laid before the Pope falsehood for truth,[1] saying that I am disseminating pernicious doctrine and heresy, whereas the world is witness that I have preached the true doctrine of Jesus Christ, in the Church where Christians assemble, and if this doctrine preached by me and by the Holy Spirit be, as our enemies have suggested, perverse, let them hold what they please. But for this teaching, I am willing to die.

And because they accuse me of disobedience, know ye that I have never been disobedient to the Holy Roman Church, nor to the Pope, nor to any of my superiors, up to this present hour; and this I say, not in self-praise, but for the sake of truth. And for truth also I have resolved to speak in this letter; and I am satisfied, if I have not said the truth, that it may be against me on the day of judgment before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. It seems to some that when a man does not obey in those things which are expressly against God, he is disobedient, because they find it hard to believe that we are not bound to obey our superiors in everything, but only in so far as they represent God; for when superiors command anything against God, they do not, in that, represent Him. And this case having arisen, I have not felt obliged to obey, knowing

[1] In the second sermon on Exodus, Savonarola frequently refers to the deception of the Pope by enemies who dishonored the Holy See. On these wicked men the Friar threw the weight of blame, and in this he was consistent throughout.

that neither God nor the Church would wish me to obey against their commands.[1] I have frequently discussed this matter in my sermons, knowing that it would happen, so that you might be ready with an answer.

Read the first sermon for Lent, 1495, and those for Monday and Wednesday after the fourth Sunday, and you will find the solution of this question. Our adversaries have objected that I have been unwilling to consent to the union of St. Mark's with the rest of Tuscany, and I have often answered that those who persuaded the Pope to this union did not act from zeal for religion, but only to persecute me, and by this means to find an opportunity of proceeding against me, believing that I would not consent to such an improper move. Their own consciences told them that, this union being pernicious, I could not approve it.

I gave them twelve reasons which satisfy and convince my mind, which they have never been able to answer, demonstrating that this union is contrary to the honor of God and to the salvation of souls. I told them that they asked of me what was not in my power, because the consent of all our brethren was required,[2]

[1] It is necessary to explain these words of the Friar. He is referring to the union of St. Mark's with the new Congregation, in which, strictly speaking, there was no question of obedience. He refuses to surrender his own just views sanctioned by canon law and theology. And this stand he too freely designates as one of refusal to obey. His words must not be taken literally. See his letter to the Pope, September 29, 1495. The fact of his actual obedience we have already recorded. Compare also our foot-note to the Brief of May 13, 1497, page 78.

[2] Not for the union, as a thing quite within the power of the

and all of them refused, regarding the affair as pernicious. Besides, it seemed proper to call the fathers of our young men who had come to live a regular life under our protection, so that they, as well as the city, having learned the conditions of the union, could never complain that we had deceived their children, who certainly would have been deceived by me had I approved of this union, for they might have been scattered among those tepid friars whom we have proved to be unworthy. And rather than have this happen, I would prefer that they had never left their fathers' houses. I also answered that, being a stranger here, if the community wished to consent I could not hinder them, nor unwilling could I force them. So the matter was in their hands, and, as they wrote to the Pope, rather than consent they would suffer excommunication, imprisonment, martyrdom.

Since, therefore, such is the case, why is disobedience imputed to me? Is it not because our adversaries seek one man whom they hate because of the truth? So you see, beloved, how great is their audacity, for they do not scruple to state manifest falsehoods to the Pope. Therefore such an excommunication is of no avail, nor is it according to the intention of Holy Church. And if they say that the sentence of the Pastor, whether just or unjust, must be feared, you have the answer to this in the sermon for the above-mentioned Wednesday.

Pope, and an accomplished fact, not at all depending on such consent for validity or legality, but for passing from a life of strict regularity to one of laxity, which they assumed would be the result of the change.

But I beseech you to pray to God to give us more than reasons,[1] since these men are so malicious that with shameful contradiction of the truth and of reason itself, they intend to live riotously. But if our reasons are rejected, and if these men wish to proceed further, I shall take care to make the truth heard by the whole world, in such a way that no one will be able to deny it; because God, in His own good time, for the confusion of Christians who do not wish to use their reason, will ordain that irrational creatures will do reverence to the truth, to which rational creatures are averse. Pray that it may be so soon. May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

A few days after the assassination of the Duke of Gandia (June 14), and probably on the 19th,[2] the Pope called a consistory, to which he also summoned the ambassadors of the States forming the Italian League. His sorrow for the murder of the young Duke was great. Under its influence he announced a complete reform of the Church in its head and members, and having, as we have already stated, been favorably impressed by Savonarola's letter of May 22, he directed a secretary to read it to the assembled cardinals and envoys, to whom he warmly commended it. The stunning blow of his son's death had so bruised his heart that he felt favorably disposed towards the Friar, whose cause he then confided to the commission, com-

[1] He means by this that grace may move their hearts, for their minds have been sufficiently enlightened.

[2] Bayonne, p. 109.

posed of six cardinals, which he had appointed for the work of reform. He also expressed annoyance at the promulgation of the excommunication under existing conditions. The Florentine envoy, Bracci, wrote two days previously that the Pope seemed even willing to revoke the Brief, but that private letters sent from Florence and against the Friar, had been received and had influenced Alexander. Nevertheless Bracci added that, to the Cardinal of Perugia, Alexander had said that the publication of the Brief, *at that time, was entirely against his intention.*[1] Other letters of Bracci and of Becchi, written at this time, prove that the vindictiveness of Mariano and of certain cardinals, as well as the persistent calumny of the *Arrabbiati*, kept the Pope in a state of constant irritation. The League and the restoration of Pisa to Florence, are frequently mentioned as the great difficulties. Alexander felt that in these things Savonarola had thwarted his policy.[2]

These political embarrassments, coupled with the hostility of the Friar's opponents, soon modified the Pope's feelings. The plotters denounced to Alexander, as an act of rebellion, Savonarola's letter of June 19, and the "Apology" for his attitude on the question of the new province, which he had published about this time. The exact date is not determined, but we know from the text of

[1] Bayonne, p. 113; Gherardi, li., pp. 171, 172.
[2] Ibid.

his preface and from Nardi[1] that it was *subsequent to the promulgation of the Brief of Excommunication.*[2] Indeed, the categorical answers with which, in the "Apology" itself, the counts in the Brief of May 13 are met, clearly prove that the papal letter had appeared first. This fact is important. Had Savonarola published the "Apology" immediately after the reception of the Pope's letter of November 7, 1496, proclaiming the erection of the new province, or before the receipt of the Brief of May 13, 1497, it might have subjected him to the censure announced by the Sovereign Pontiff. *Issued after the reception in Florence of the papal letter declaring him excommunicate*, Savonarola's "Apology" cannot be considered as the occasion of a censure already promulgated. By assigning this "Apology" to the preceding year, certain writers have made out, to their seeming satisfaction, a clear case against the Friar. Had Alexander, after the publication of the "Apology" of Savonarola, issued a Brief declaring that because of this "Apology," he had fallen under the censure, there would probably be no room for controversy. But as dates and facts are; as the Pope issued no Brief of excommunication against Savonarola save that of May 13, 1497, and as this Brief was issued before the appearance of the Friar's "Apology," it is evi-

[1] Page 69.

[2] For further particulars, see Luotto, p. 513; and *Quarto Centenario*, p. 227.

dent that, so far as the "Apology" is concerned, the aspect of the Friar's case remains unchanged. We give his introduction or preface without abbreviation; the substance of the "Apology" will duly follow:[1] —

"'For if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it.'[2] But now when the word is in contempt of religion and to the injury of souls, because of the vilification of our ministry, it would be wrong for us to remain silent. I am obliged to refute openly the calumnies of our adversaries, whose malignity has gone so far that not only have they endeavored to turn the Sovereign Pontiff against us, but in the streets and lanes they gossip about us and pervert the minds of simple folk.

"I hope, for the dignity and justice of the Apostolic See, that the Pope, on learning the truth, will take our side; now nothing remains but to declare our innocence, which is known to God and to this entire city; for necessity compels us to oppose our loud and insulting opponents.

"Excessive tolerance, I fear, would breed great scandal, and I should be accused on the day of judgment of neglecting truth and of endangering the public welfare. Invoking, therefore, as witnesses, God and the blessed in Heaven, I shall not cease to proclaim the truth, nor for this can any one be displeased with me, unless he wishes openly to profess himself its enemy.

[1] Quetif (pp. 74–99) gives the full Latin text. The Introduction contains three pages; the Apology, twenty-two. We summarize it without substantial change.

[2] Psalm liv., 12.

"Three points are alleged against us by our detractors: first, that I taught perverse dogma; secondly, that having been summoned to Rome, to justify myself (*ad me purgandum*), I refused to go; thirdly, that I would not obey the command of the Sovereign Pontiff in the matter of the union of our Congregation with the newly formed Tuscan Congregation.[1]

"Two of these points refer to me alone, but they have so often been made clear, as all know, that it is not well to dwell on them at length. The third, as will be seen, does not concern me alone. As to the first,— teaching perverse dogma,— the publications of my discourses reported by a rapid and faithful writer, will bear witness that it is false. And in all that I have thus far published, which I have always submitted to the correction of the Holy Roman Church, no error has been found; and this will also be evident in my 'Triumph of the Cross,' which the booksellers will soon bring out. God forbid that our Order, which has ever been known as the vigorous opponent of error and heresy, should be stained by false teaching.[2]

"Touching the summons to Rome, the Pope's letter will prove that I was not called '*ad me purgandum*.' The Sovereign Pontiff graciously invited me to an agreeable conference; and nothing could or would have been more acceptable to me had I been able to go. But the conspiracies of those to whom the truth is hateful,

[1] These are the particular charges specified in the Brief of excommunication. In no previous document are they found in this precise form, and thus it is clear that Savonarola's letter is an answer to these points.

[2] The Church has vindicated the Friar on this point, and beyond cavil, after a thorough examination of his writings.

powerful enemies, endangered my life. Scarcely among the people of the city can I move freely, or even to the churches, because of the plots and snares against me. The merest tyro in theology knows that one is not obliged to go where his life will be in jeopardy.

"The difficulty centres about the third charge, which, as I said, does not concern me alone, because it is not a matter left to my judgment, but to that of two hundred and fifty friars, of whom many belong to the nobility, and are men venerable for their piety, prudence, and learning, among whom I am a stranger, and not their master, but their servant in humble charity.

"They have appealed to the Sovereign Pontiff, unanimously declaring by letter that they will suffer the extreme penalty rather than consent to the union, which is repugnant to their profession.[1]

"From this honest and holy design I know not how to dissuade them, nor could I. The reasons which they give are here presented, though I know that this will be displeasing to some religious. But they have only themselves to blame. They have forced this difficulty on us, who have been reluctant to meet it. Hitherto we have kept silent, concealing, so far as we could, the state of affairs. But now, as they have persisted, it would be to the prejudice of truth if we held our peace.

"They have disturbed our quiet, and in this they have not spared God and Religion. We, therefore, who struggle for the honor of Divine worship and for justice, owe them no further consideration. Hear then the reasons of our brethren. . . ."

It is immaterial to our purpose to present the long and detailed statement of the community of

[1] The text of their letter has not been preserved.

St. Mark's. We give rather its substance, embodying as an introduction a summary of the arguments against St. Mark's position: —

(*a*) The relaxed and irregular friars wish, for their own reform, to be united to St. Mark's.

(*b*) This reform is in itself a good to be desired.

(*c*) It cannot injure St. Mark's.

(*d*) All Tuscany ought to be united in one province.

(*e*) We ought to obey our superiors.

Against these points the arguments of the "Apology" are that if a little leaven ferments the whole mass,[1] the lax Tuscans, who, according to their own admission, are a considerable leaven, would simply corrupt St. Mark's, thus effecting, not a reformation, but a deformation, certainly a thing neither good nor reasonable.[2] Then follows

[1] 1 Corinthians v. 6; Galatians v. 9. Savonarola is also sustained in his argument by the words of our Blessed Lord: "Nobody putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment, for it taketh away the fulness thereof from the garment, and there is made a greater rent. Neither do they put new wine into old bottles. Otherwise the bottles break, and the wine runneth out and the bottles perish. But new wine they put into new bottles, and both are preserved." (St. Matthew ix. 16, 17.)

[2] We supplement this moderate statement regarding the scandalous friars by a few facts, on which probably Savonarola did not consider it necessary to dwell. Many of these friars so stubbornly resisted what they thought might be a reformation that some of them were threatened with censure, with punishment by the secular arm, and several priors of these lax communities were summoned to Rome by the Cardinal Protector of

a scholastic disquisition as to the meaning of reform, and detailed arguments are vigorously set forth to show that the new union would not be good. The other points, except the last, the "Apology" summarily dismisses.

On that of obedience the brethren of St. Mark's dwell at some length. We give the substance of the argument. We are not, they write, obliged to obey our superiors in all things, but only when they command according to the Gospel, or the Rule and Constitutions to which we have vowed obedience. When they command what is contrary to these, there is no obligation of obedience. The "Apology" declares that Savonarola and his brethren are certain that the fusion commanded, of St. Mark's with relaxed convents, is contrary to truth and charity and against a real union of heart and soul. They know well that the evils already mentioned would follow, and that other scandals and greater losses would also result from the movement.

The brethren believe, therefore, that it is neither the intention nor the will of their Superior, the Pope, to bind them by obligations which it would be wrong to observe. We ought, they add, to follow the mind of the law-giver rather than his words, and as no good can come from the new province, but only harm, the evil design of those

the Order, and deposed from office because of their resistance to the movement. See Bayonne, pp. 95, 96.

who, under a pretence of good, have urged this union, is apparent.[1]

Towards the end of June, in an audience granted to the Florentine ambassador by the Pope, the latter angrily protested that he would employ all the canonical means in his power against Savonarola, as a contumacious subject. Then, speaking more gently, Alexander bade the envoy write to the Signory to ask that the Friar be sent to Rome, to clear himself, adding that a safe conduct would be furnished. "I wish," he concluded, "to hear him; if he is innocent I shall give him my blessing; if he is guilty I shall exercise justice and mercy."[2]

The Signory would not accede to the request. The Florentine politicians declined to accept as sufficient the papal guaranty for Savonarola's protection, for they had good reason to fear that paid Mediceans or *Arrabbiati* assassins would beset him on the road. At this time the Friar's letter of sympathy for the death of the Duke of Gandia was on its way to the Pope, a frank and friendly utter-

[1] In his sermon for Septuagesima, 1498, Savonarola fully discusses all the points in the "Apology."

[2] Gherardi, p. 172. We call the reader's special attention to the Pontiff's clearly expressed doubt, "If he is innocent." Alexander's mind was not satisfied. He was not convinced of the Friar's guilt; and therefore he was not certain that the censure had been incurred. No other conclusion may be drawn from the Pope's words.

ance, showing the character of the man. For this reason we present the full text:[1] —

Most Holy Father, — I kiss your blessed feet. Divine Faith, resting as it does on unnumbered miracles and ever strengthened by the holy works, preaching, arguments, doctrine, and blood of numberless glorious martyrs, is the only true peace and consolation of the human heart. For while Faith transcends sense and reason, and rests on the Divine power and goodness, lifting our souls to the things that are invisible, transporting us above this world, it gives us such nobility of spirit and courage that we not only bear all trials patiently, but even glory in our tribulations; for it is written that the just man shall not be sad, no matter what may happen to him. The just man is one who lives in Faith, as the Lord has declared. Blessed, therefore, is he who is called by the Lord to this grace of Faith, without which no one can have peace, according to the words of Isaiah: "There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord my God."

May your Holiness, Most Blessed Father, realize how quickly sorrow may be turned into joy! Sweet, indeed is the Lord, Whose goodness is infinitely above our sins. Every other consolation is transitory and deceitful, because time is short, and we are passing to eternity. Faith alone brings joy from the heavenly land. I speak from experience, from what I have heard and seen and felt, for which I willingly suffer persecution that I may gain Christ, and escape eternal

[1] Perrens (pp. 364, 365) gives the Latin.

punishment, knowing that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

May your Holiness, therefore, help the work of Faith, for which I labor constantly, even unto bonds. I pray your Holiness not to give ear to the wicked; and may God grant to you the oil of joy instead of the spirit of mourning. I have spoken in this the truth; for who has ever resisted God and found peace?

These things, Most Holy Father, I humbly write to you under the inspiration of charity, desiring that your Holiness may be truly consoled in the Lord, and not deceitfully. For soon His anger will flame out, and blessed shall they be who trust in Him. May the God of all consolation, Who raised from the dead the great Pastor of His sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver you from all tribulation, in the Blood of His Eternal Testament. Farewell!

FLORENCE, JUNE 25, 1497.

The Pope seemed to receive this letter with good-will, though the Friar's enemies pretended to regard it as insolent. The conspirators distorted every utterance of Savonarola, and not only did they put an evil construction on all his actions, however meritorious, but, usurping the judgment of God, they unscrupulously condemned his motives and imputed evil to him in his holiest works.

In July two petitions were drawn up, one by the brethren of St. Mark's, the other by Florentine citizens, both bearing generous testimony to the Prior's virtues and great services to religion,

and praying relief from the ban against him.[1] The Signory elected for July and August, and composed of the Friar's friends, also redoubled their efforts for the same purpose.[2] About this time a proposition was made to Savonarola that if five thousand scudi were paid to a certain creditor of the Cardinal of Siena, he would procure the revocation of the Brief.[3] With righteous indignation the Friar spurned the offer.

[1] Villari (ii. xlii–xliv) gives the full Italian text. Also in his "Scelta," pp. 512–519, this latter including the names of the citizen signatories.

[2] Quetif (pp. 127 *seq.*) gives the full text (Latin) of an admirable letter, reverential in language, dignified in tone, religious in spirit, which the Signory despatched to the Pope, eulogizing the Friar, whose shining virtues had made him the target of envy, and pleading, for his sake, for the welfare of souls, for the honor of the Florentine people ever loyal to the Holy See, that the ban should be raised, — a favor they would welcome as the highest proof of pontifical good-will, greater than any other His Holiness could grant. The original of this letter, with others, we give in an appendix.

[3] Burlamacchi, p. 553; Villari, ii. 198. The statement of these writers we find confirmed by the prudent and fair-minded Father Marchese, who discovered a letter from Savonarola to the Chancellor of the Duke of Ferrara, in which he said, "I would consider myself far more heavily censured if I accepted the revocation of the ban under such terms." He added that the Sovereign Pontiff was personally well disposed towards him, but that powerful and malevolent individuals were endeavoring to sway the Pope. Henceforth, therefore, he must abandon himself to God, in Whose hands are all things, with the firm conviction that He will bring what is best, and that no adversity can prevail against one who has done no iniquity. (Marchese, Scritti Vari, i, 237). Certainly he was making a brave fight, for the noblest of ends; but how uneven was the contest!

It is not necessary to give all the letters that passed between Florence and Rome during this troubled time. Those from Florence had the same determined purpose: the Friar's friends, led by the Signory, strove manfully to have the Brief revoked; his enemies were unwearied, not in fair opposition, but in continued and often malignant misrepresentation. In all this, Savonarola saw only the development of what he had predicted, the working out, in orderly fashion, of the plan permitted by God for the purification of His true servants. Hence he proclaimed the jubilant spirit of himself and his brethren whose prayers were constant for their adversaries.[1]

As demonstrating the humility, obedience, and truly religious spirit of Savonarola, the following letter written by him on October 13, 1497, five months after the issue of the Brief of excommunication, is of great value:[2]—

[1] Letter to della Mirandola, dated July 2. The full text (Italian) is given in "Miscellanea," p. 589.

[2] The original (Latin) of this important letter was discovered in the early part of 1898, on the occasion of special researches in view of the fourth-centenary celebrations of the Friar's death. For interesting details and for the original draft, see pp. 83, 84 of the *Quarto Centenario* Magazine. It is not known whether the Pope received this appeal. Considering the probably favorable disposition of Alexander, as previously noted, and finding no record of an answer, or any reference to Savonarola's communication, we believe that it did not reach the Holy Father, who could scarcely have declined to notice so touching a proof of reverence and submission. We are of the opinion that the letter was intercepted by the Friar's enemies. As the latter

Most Holy Father, — I kiss your blessed feet! As a child, grieving for having incurred the displeasure of his father, seeks and craves every means and opportunity of appeasing his anger (nor can any repulse make him despair of regaining his wonted affection, since it is written, "Ask and it shall be given to you, knock and it shall be opened unto you"), so I also, more anxious because your Holiness has withdrawn your favor from me than for any other loss, eagerly fly to your feet, beseeching you that at last [1] my cry may be heard in your sight, and that I may no longer be deprived of your embrace.

To whom shall I go, if not, as one of his sheep, to the Shepherd whose voice I long to hear, whose blessing I implore, whose saving presence I ardently desire? I would at once go and cast myself at your feet if I could make the journey, free from the attacks and plots of wicked men. As soon as I can do so without risk, I intend to start, and with all my heart I wish it, so that at last I may clear myself from every calumny.

In the meantime, I most humbly submit, in all things, as I have ever done, to your supreme authority; for if through want of judgment or inadvertence I have erred, you will not find in me wilful malice. I

were capable of any iniquity against him, and as they had on various occasions waylaid his couriers, stolen his correspondence, and forged despatches in his name, we are not rash in suspecting them of a like offence on this occasion. For instances of this dishonorable method of opposition, characteristic of the age, we refer the reader to Villari, ii. 119, 295.

[1] The natural inference is that Savonarola had previously written without avail; the letters were probably intercepted or lost.

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humbly implore forgiveness. I beseech your Holiness, therefore, that you will deign not to close against me the fountain of your clemency and benignity, for did you know me you would find me not less devoted to your Holiness than sincere, and ever your most obedient servant. I humbly commend myself to your Holiness.

Your Holiness's most devoted son and servant.

The efforts of his friends continued in unabated zeal, and their hope of relief was general. As late as November 19, according to a letter written by the Roman envoy of the Duke of Ferrara, Savonarola had reason to expect a speedy and favorable settlement of the unhappy affair, for even then the Pope seemed kindly disposed towards him.[1] But the spirit of revenge and the conflicting interests of politics were destined to spoil all.[2]

Towards the end of the year the Republic became impatient on account of hopes so long deferred, and arranged to send Dominic Bonsi, as a second special envoy to Rome, instructed to co-operate with Bracci for three purposes: the relief of Savonarola, the restoration of Pisa through the Pope's influence, and an authorization to levy a tax on church property, to enable the government to meet extraordinary expenses.

The new year, 1498, was drawing near, with

[1] Cappelli, pp. 98, 99.

[2] Bonsi's letter (Gherardi, p. 208), sent later, proves this. See also Marchese, Scritti Vari, i. 238.

Savonarola still in retirement and entering on the seventh month of his public submission to the Brief of excommunication, though in his own convent he held his office of Prior (and no contrary orders had come from the Master General), and had celebrated Mass daily.[1] It was his deference for the papal mandate, his fear of possible scandal to the weak, that dictated his public course, and withheld him, during the plague in the summer of 1497, from ministering sacramentally to the afflicted people.[2]

The period of silence had, however, been well utilized. Some of Savonarola's best literary work was then done, including the completion of the "Triumph of the Cross." Moreover, the nature of the difficulty between himself and the Pope had been explained and made clear through various publications. The question had been fully discussed *pro* and *con*, the most notable contribution to the controversy, after the Friar's own writings,

[1] Among his own brethren he had not ceased to discharge any of the offices of religion. The Chronicle of St. Mark records, among other incidents of this period, several receptions to the habit and professions of novices made under Savonarola as Prior of the convent.

[2] Ignorance on this point has led incompetent writers to charge Savonarola with cowardice, the last accusation that could be brought against him. Two beautiful letters breathing the spirit of a true servant of God, not only ready to lay down his life, but even eager for death, are his own clear evidence. They were written in July, and were addressed to the Brethren of St. Mark's, and to a Father Paul. See *Epistolæ*, pp. 179 *seq.*

having been John Francis Pico della Mirandola's "Defence against the Unjust Excommunication."[1]

The majority of the people were, therefore, not only instructed, prepared against scandal, but were eager for the reappearance in the pulpit of the Friar. "We die of hunger," they said; "when will you preach?"[2] Since July they had witnessed the results of his suspension, for, in less than a month after the excommunication had been published, Florence had gone back to the days of Lorenzo. "Immoral practices had returned, as if by magic; the churches had been deserted, and the taverns filled."[3] The contemporary historian Nardi paints a sad picture; and the drawing of other writers of the time is equally graphic.

The libertines, who thoroughly understood the situation, were for their own vile purposes delighted at the great preacher's humiliation and powerlessness. The cold-blooded politicians, who had no standard save that of selfishness and expediency, though they were aware of the facts governing the case, were ready to play politics against religion, Pisa against the Friar, as might best suit their present purpose.[4]

[1] Quetif gives the original Latin, — the first of his "Additiones."

[2] Bayonne, p. 142.

[3] Villari, ii. 193. The Friar himself enters into details in his second sermon on Exodus, showing the fearful backsliding of the people.

[4] The sad ending of May, 1498, would prove how few real friends Savonarola had among the public men of Florence. His passing was to be another illustration of the painful truth

CHRISTMAS, 1497 — FEBRUARY 11, 1498.

Having taken careful measure of the state of affairs, having deliberately weighed all the circumstances, in the light, not of conscience only, but of theology and canon law, and after counsel with competent men in his own community and with other friends, Savonarola determined to assert what he believed to be his right, to fulfil what he regarded as a duty.

On Christmas, 1497, he publicly celebrated Mass, administered Communion to a large number of the faithful, and conducted a grand procession through the cloister and square of St. Mark's.[1]

On Epiphany, 1498, the Signory in a body solemnly went to St. Mark's to attend the Mass, which was sung by the Prior. This demonstration was intended by the officials to be a public manifestation of their veneration for Savonarola, whose hand each one in turn afterwards kissed. Three days later Bonsi started for Rome.

For almost a month the political fencing was continued. On February 8, the envoy was able to report to his Government that the Pope, having

that not many politicians are capable of genuine friendship when their interests are endangered.

[1] This procession was but a part of the extraordinary devotions that had been offered by request of Savonarola, in all the convents of the Congregation, from All Saints, 1497, in supplication for light and for the special mercy of God on His afflicted Church.

received guaranties, was prepared to settle the affair of Pisa, and that then he would do everything possible to gratify the Republic.[1] In the meantime the Signory had ordered that benches should be provided for the Cathedral, as during the Lent of 1496. The Vicar General,[2] the Archbishop being then absent, made a protest, and published a letter forbidding attendance at the sermons, under penalty of excommunication. The Signory gave him two hours to withdraw his threats and prohibitions, and to resign his post, or they would deal with him as a rebel.[3] This decisive stand had the desired effect.

Savonarola was then in the Convent of Fiesole. Thither the ambassador of the Duke of Ferrara went to interview him as to his feelings and wishes. To the ambassador's objection that if he preached he would give scandal, Savonarola answered that had the censure been justly inflicted, no one would more fully respect it. He commented on the deplorable condition of the Roman Court, and added that his speaking would provoke neither scandal nor disorder.[4]

On Septuagesima Sunday, February 11, he

[1] Gherardi, p. 176.

[2] A member of the Medici family.

[3] Nardi, l. ii., p. 69.

[4] Cappelli, pp. 101, 102. The reader who consults Pastor, "History of the Popes," vi. 104–106, will learn of one most painful incident which then kindled anew and justly the fire of Savonarola's indignant zeal.

mounted the pulpit of the Duomo, and delivered a remarkable sermon, during which he explained and defended his position with regard to the excommunication.

Here, we believe, our narration of the historical facts should close, with the presentation of one letter, that written by the Friar on March 13, and promptly forwarded to the Pope. We pass by the "ordeal," the foolish and unhappy spectacle that was the immediate occasion for the mob's outbreak; we do not consider the treachery of the selfish politicians who bartered away the life of an unselfish benefactor and genuine patriot; we do not discuss Savonarola's letters to the sovereigns, touching a Council, — an occasion of great alarm to Alexander,[1] of renewed anger against the bold friar, *and the final cause of his death.*[2] We do not enter on a criticism of his preaching following his appearance in the pulpit on Septuagesima Sunday.[3]

What Savonarola said or did subsequently has no bearing on the validity of the censure. An intelligent judgment of his case can be formed only after a consideration of the essential facts as we have given them; and only after a studious examination of these facts under the light of admitted principles of canon law and theology, can a satis-

[1] Nardi, l. ii., p. 70.

[2] In a subsequent volume, I hope to discuss these questions freely, when I shall give important documents.

[3] We shall, however, refer to these sermons in the course of our argument.

factory answer be made to our inquiry. Still, a letter written by the Friar at a time when he foresaw rapidly approaching the end which for years he had predicted, affords an insight into his soul and the purpose of his mission, that may not be valueless in our estimate of his conduct. We give the full text:[1]—

Most Holy Father, — Having seen some pastors of the Church leading into error, through evil example and unsound doctrine, the sheep committed to their care, yea, by their many crimes going forward to hell, I considered it part of my duty, for the honor of God and for the exaltation of the most Holy Faith, to defend the truth of Catholic teaching, to denounce immorality, to correct sinners, and to recall them to a Christian manner of living. But while I so preach, endeavoring, by the announcement of impending scourges for the wicked, to draw the people to the narrow way, "tribulation and distress have seized me, and there is no one who will console or help me."

At least, I hoped that your Holiness would come to my aid, and that you would arise and fight for me, against the enemies of the Faith. The contrary, alas, has happened! Since your Holiness rejected so many vindications of my innocence, so many reasons submitted to you, not to excuse sin, but to demonstrate the purity of my teaching, the truth of my preaching, and to show the humility with which I venerate your Holiness and the Holy Roman Church;

[1] For the Latin text, see Quetif, pp. 298–300.

and since, as it seems, you gave ear to my adversaries, so that it was hopeless for me to look for any help from your Holiness, which of right I should receive from the Supreme Pastor, I consider myself as abandoned to the fierce wolves who rage against me.

However, my hope is in Him who chooses the weak things of this world that He may confound the strong. He will hear me, because of the truth for which I have borne and suffered so much. And He will punish those who have persecuted me, who have prevented the work of God which I strove to do, after the example of Christ; for never did I seek my own glory nor do I seek it now, but only death, and that with the most ardent longing.

Let your Holiness not fail to take measures for your own salvation.

Your useless servant in Jesus Christ.

March 13, 1498.

There was no answer to this letter; its effect on Alexander cannot be judged, but succeeding events were calamitous for the Friar.

II.

THE QUESTION OF CENSURES.

THAT our readers may have before them the principles of canon law regarding ecclesiastical censures, as these affect Savonarola's case, we present such principles with sufficient fulness for an intelligent understanding. A censure is a spiritual and medicinal penalty, inflicted by competent ecclesiastical authority, on those of the faithful who are delinquent and contumacious, through which penalty they are deprived, for a time, of the use of certain spiritual goods, for the purpose of just punishment, but chiefly to induce them to relinquish their obstinacy or contumacy in sin. Our definition embodies the points generally included by canonists.[1]

Of the three kinds of censures that are employed by the Church, we are concerned with one only, excommunication, which is defined as a separation

[1] Billuart, de Censuris, D. i., art. i., tom. ix., p. 482; Schmalzgrueber, pars iv., t. 39, n. 1 *seq.*; Reiffenstuel, l. v. Decret. t. 39, c. 1, n. 1–6, tom. v., p. 320; Zallinger, l. v., t. 39, tom. v. p. 255; Stremler, prem. partie, s. iv., c. 1, p. 171; Leander, Tr. i., D. i., q. 1 *seq.*, tom. iv., pp. 3, 4; and canonists and moral theologians in general. Leander enters into details not generally available, on every phase of the intricate question of Censures.

from the communion of the Church as to fruit and general suffrages.[1]

We may enlarge on this language of the schools, so as to render it more clearly intelligible to the general reader, by stating that the drawing of this sword, as the Council of Trent[2] designates excommunication, whereby a diseased member is severed from the spiritual Body of Christ, is the gravest penalty that the Church can impose;[3] it implies the most grievous deprivation, an ejection, for a time, from the household of God on earth, and a denial of certain spiritual favors and blessings which are the happy portion of the faithful.

We say an ejection *for a time*, because, while an excommunication might endure, on account of the obstinacy of the sinner, until death, its purpose, in the mind of the Church, is of salutary punishment, leading to a change of life, urging a return to God in penitence; and, therefore, as a disciplinary and medicinal remedy, this separation of a member from the Body of Christ, is not intended to be perpetual.[4]

[1] St. Thomas, In 4 Sent. D. xviii., q. 2, a. 2, and Supplementum, q. xxi., a. 1; St. Raymundus, l. iii., t. 33, s. 6, p. 380.

[2] Sess. xxv., cap. 3, de Reformatione, where the Conciliar Fathers speak of excommunication as the very nerves of ecclesiastical discipline. Several of the early Fathers also use the figure of a sword to signify the spiritual weapon of excommunication. Thus St. Cyprian, Epistle 62, to Pomponius, n. 4, tom. iv., p. 371, and St. Jerome, Epistle 14, to Heliodorus, n. 8, tom. i. (xxii. of Patrology), p. 352.

[3] St. Augustine, Lib. de Correptione et Gratia, cap. xv., p. 944, tom. x. (xliv. of Patrology); Benedict XIV., l. x., c. 1, p. 343.

[4] St. Antoninus, cap. 76, n. 1, p. 383 (secundo); St. Augus-

We also say a denial of *certain* spiritual favors, because, though excommunication deprives the person so censured, either wholly or in part, of the common spiritual goods of the Church, — as Mass, the Sacraments, — it does not strip him of those which proceed directly from Christ the Head, — as Faith and Hope, — over which the Church does not exercise control, nor does it shut him out from the private prayers of the faithful, since the Church does not wish to raise such a barrier against his aid. A member thus rejected from the household of the Faith is, while the censure endures, as "the heathen and the publican," [1] as one given over to Satan.[2]

As the right of fulminating such a censure arises from the authority with which Jesus Christ has enriched His Church, for her proper government and for just defence against unruly members, this power is not a personal, absolute right, subject to the mere will of prelates, but it must be exercised "with great sobriety and modera-

tine (loc. cit.), who speaks of it as a pastoral necessity, a separation from the healthy sheep of one who has been contaminated, in the hope of its cure, a separation with love (Enarratio in Ps. liv., N. 9, tom. iv., 635), and as a merciful severity (De Fide et Operibus, c. iii., tom. vi., 199), respectively tom. xxxv. and xxxvii. of Patrology; Craisson, tom. iv., lib. iii., pars 3, cap. 2, N. 6360, p. 308.

[1] St. Matthew xviii. 17.

[2] 1 Corinthians v. 5; St. Augustine (De Verbis Evangelii Matthæi, Sermo 68, n. 4, p. 1876, tom. v., altera pars, xxxix. of Patrology) says that such a one has gone down by the broad and spacious way, as to hell.

tion;"[1] it is safeguarded by well-defined conditions in respect to which ecclesiastical law is explicit. We shall, therefore, present some points as taught by canonists on censures in general, confining ourselves to those which are available in excommunication, and which are particularly applicable in the special case of Savonarola.

The infliction of this penalty presupposes a very grave offence against Faith, morals, or ecclesiastical discipline. Such a sin must be not only mortal internally, or in conscience, but it must also be externally evident in its enormity, complete of its kind, and specially prohibited by the Church, under censure. Moreover, in case of an individual excommunicated, his crime must be entirely personal, his own alone, so to speak, and even notorious, before he can be denounced as having incurred such a penalty. Finally, in this unhappy state of guilt the delinquent must be truly obstinate or contumacious, before he can be bound in conscience, though the just presumption of such a state of mind would suffice for the external effects of a censure.[2]

[1] Conc. Trid. Sess. XXV., cap. 3, de Reformatione.

[2] The reader is referred to the following authorities: Concilium Lateranense, cap. 48, de Sententia Exc.; Concilium Lugdunense, cap. *Constitutionem*, 9 de Sent. Exc. in 6°; Concil. Trid. Sess. XXV., c. 3, de Reformatione; St. Raymundus, l. iii., t. 33, s. 7, p. 391; Schmalzgrueber, pars iv., t. 39, de Sent. Exc. tom. xi., p. 397, no. 34, pp. 403, 405, 406, nn. 57, 62-66; Billuart, de Censuris, D. i., a. 4, tom. ix., pp. 482 *seq.*; St. Alphonsus, l. vii., c. l., n. 31, 48, 49, tom. ii., pp. 791, 795; Fagnanus, cap. *Responso*, in

The note of contumacy is warranted only when a warning has been given, and has not been heeded. For censures attached to a fixed law, the promulgation of the statute constitutes a standing warning, though a more formal or canonical admonition is necessary for due order and for the justice of such a penalty. For the valid infliction of censures emanating from a superior commanding a particular thing by way of a personal precept,[1]

ii. par. de Sent Exc. n. 92, tom. iv. 194, secundo; Bucceroni, p. 7; D'Annibale, t. vi., tit. xi., c. 1, tom. i., p. 321; Castro Palao, de Censuris, pars vi., D. 1, p. 7, nn. 6, 7; Concina (Theologia), l. iii., c. 4, de Censuris, tom. x., p. 254; Leander, t. i. D. 8, q. 2 *seq.*, tom. iv., pp. 58 *seq.*; Stremler, prem. p. c. vi., s. 4, p. 189; Cabassutius, l. v., c. 10, n. 11, tom. ii., p. 172; Reiffenstuel, l. v. Decret. t. 39, de Sent. Exc. c. 1., nn. 8, 9, p. 320; Bailly, tom. ii., 5, a. 5; Berardi, pars ii., D. 3, c. 4, tom. iv., p. 237; Prælectiones S. Sulpitii, pars iv., s. 7, a. 1, tom. iii., pp. 227 *seq.*; Benedict XIV., l. ix., c. 6, and c. 14, pp. 299, 329, l. x. c. 1, p. 343; Craisson, tom. iv., lib. iii. pars 3, n. 6321 *seq.*, pp. 294, 295, and cap. 2, sec. iv., n. 6394 *seq.*, pp. 319–324. On the rashness and injustice of superiors indiscreetly imposing censures, especially those *latæ sententiæ*, Gerson writes plainly. "To whom," asks this celebrated doctor, "shall I liken such men, who, for political convenience or for avoiding slight trouble, act in this manner? To one who, wishing to brush from his neighbor's forehead a fly, strikes him with an axe and dashes out his brains." (Quoted by Van Espen, tom. ix., p. 15.) Vigorous and picturesque!

We do not consider in this discussion, what is known as *minor* excommunication, which may be inflicted for venial sin. It is not only irrelevant, but, strictly speaking, it is not excommunication as generally understood, which, as St. Antoninus says, cap. 74, n. 9, following the canons, cap. *Si quem*, 59, de Sent. Excom. is always considered major when there is no distinction; nor is it any longer of practical purpose.

[1] Which is considered temporary, as distinguished from a law that is stable and fixed; and thus penalties announced by

some warning is necessary. The obligation of a canonical or triple and written admonition rests on Scriptural grounds [1] and has a solemn historical confirmation in the case of Nestorius, who was thrice warned by the Fathers of Ephesus, and in that of Dioscorus, who was treated in like manner by the Fathers of Chalcedon.

According to the doctors in canon law, this threefold admonition is necessary for the legal justice of a sentence (unless the urgent gravity of the case would warrant a superior in giving only one warning and that peremptorily), and according to the present discipline, a period of two days at least should intervene between the formal written announcements.[2]

the former are known as censures *ab homine*, and the latter, censures *a jure*. For this distinction as to the efficient cause of censures, the reader is referred to any of our canonist authorities, but St. Raymond (l. iii., t. 33, s. 7, pp. 381, 392) treats this point *in extenso* and very clearly.

[1] St. Matthew xviii. 15–18; 2 Thessalonians iii. 11–15.

[2] St. Antoninus, cap. 74, n. 5, p. 382 (secundo); St. Thomas, In 4 Sent. D. xix., q. 1, art. 3; St. Alphonsus, l. vii., c. 1, n. 52 *seq.*, tom. ii. pp. 796 *seq.*; Billuart, loc. cit.; Panormitanus, tom. viii., pp. 182, 183, cc. 18, 19, 23, who claimed that four days' interval should be given; Reiffenstuel, loc. cit., p. 321, n. 24, n. 37, p. 322, tom. v.; Schmalzgrueber, pars iv. t. 39, de Sent. Exc., tom. xi., pp. 394–396, n. 26–31; D'Annibale, Tr. vi., tit. 1, tom. i., pp. 323, 324; Sandæus, cap. 48, *Sacro*, de Sent. Exc. ii. 1224; Bucceroni, pp. 8, 9; Leander, t. i., D. 5, qq. 1 *seq.*, tom. iv., pp. 36 *seq.*; Innocentius IV., in cap. *Cum medicinalis*, de Sent. Exc., l. v., p. cxlix (2); Stremler, prem. p., s. iv., chap. 9, pp. 212, 213; Cabassutius, l. v., c. 10, n. 18 *seq.*, pp. 175 *seq.*; Benedict XIV., l. ix., c. 14, p. 329; De Palude, In 4 Sent. D. xviii., q. 1, art. 4. This feature of contumacy (which cannot be imputed

But, without *any* warning, at least verbal, an alleged delinquent cannot be declared contumacious, or in contempt, even virtual, of ecclesiastical authority commanding under censure by way of a particular precept. Therefore, as an essential condition (that of contumacy) would be wanting, a censure *ab homine*, so promulgated, would be invalid.[1]

Considering the formal terms in which they are expressed, censures are distinguished as *latæ sententiæ*, and *ferendæ sententiæ*. In doubt, the latter, as the milder, is always to be understood.[2] By censures *latæ sententiæ* those are meant that are so joined to a law or a precept that by the very fact of disobedience to such law or precept, the penalty is incurred, in conscience and before God. For the public brand and effect before men there is required, however, a due statement, by competent authority, of the admitted or proved fact of such disobedience. Such a statement, or sentence, does not require a judicial process; it is simply a formal

where there is no warning) is so essential that it is only when it is present and grave that, according to the general opinion of canonists, excommunication can be inflicted for sins altogether past and having no relation to the future. And then the penalty strikes directly, not the sin, but the persistence in it by the obstinate sinner.

[1] Consult authorities named in preceding note (2, p. 113,) and canonists in general.

[2] Schmalzgrueber, pars iv., t. 39, de Sent. Exc. tom. xi., p. 388, n. 11; Bucceroni, p. 8; Cabassutius, l. v., c. 10, n. 6, tom. ii., p. 171.

declaration, an official announcement to the public that the delinquent named has already brought upon himself the penalty imposed.[1] In no manner does the validity of the censure or its binding force, in conscience, depend on this declaratory sentence.[2]

Censures *ferendæ sententiæ* are promulgated, not as operative on the commission of the prohibited act, but as threats, and as involving liability to such penalties, after due process against the offender by the superior, who thus gives effective force, through a judicial sentence, to the menace accompanying the command.[3]

As to censures *a jure*, being attached to laws which are presumed to be just, there can be no question of injustice; it is only in censures *ab homine* that the distinction is necessary between *just* and *unjust*.

That a censure *ab homine* may be considered just and valid, the following conditions are required: jurisdiction, a legitimate motive, a cause sufficiently proved, and a right and lawful order of procedure. Lacking either of these which are not substantial (as a legitimate motive or the accidentals of right order), the censure is valid before the Church, but unjust. Lacking any of the con-

[1] For details, the reader is referred to Schmalzgrueber, pars iv., t. 39, de Sent. Exc., tom. xi., p. 388, n. 11; Vecchiotti, tom. ii. p. 334; Cuniliati, ii. 353, and canonists generally.

[2] Even were the sentence otherwise null, its nullity would affect only the public consequences of the censure. Stremler, prem. p., s. iv., c. 9, p. 213.

[3] Stremler, prem. p., s. iv., chap. 2, p. 177, and others.

ditions that are substantial (as jurisdiction, a cause sufficiently proved, or the essentials of right order), such censures are invalid as well as unjust; and this must, therefore, be said of all fulminated either against an innocent person, or without *any* warning or citation to a delinquent, or without juridical proof of the offence.[1]

Thus a person must be considered as legally innocent, not only when in conscience he is really free from the guilt of the alleged offence, but also when, though really guilty, he is juridically acquitted or not juridically proved guilty.[2] On this conclusion there is no dispute; all canonists agree that a censure uttered against such a person would be an abuse of power, and of no binding force. In the case of one really innocent, but through untoward circumstances and weight of evidence, juridically convicted, canonists disagree as to the binding power of a censure fulminated on such a conviction. The more probable opinion, supported by eminent authorities, holds that though such a censure, resting on a false presumption and

[1] St. Raymond, l. iii., t. 33, s. 8, p. 403; Van Espen, c. v., s. 1, 3, tom. ix., pp. 16, 17; and other authorities, as in note 3, p. 113.

[2] Even if the judge has private or personal knowledge of the guilt of the accused, a sentence based on it alone would be null; the condemnation must rest on information officially recognized and juridically admitted and proved. This holds for censures in general; our discussion does not touch the disputed question as to ordinary judicial proceedings, nor do we include suspension *ex informata conscientia*.

on error, would be invalid in conscience, yet out of respect for the authority of the Church, and to avoid scandal, the one thus unjustly censured should pay external respect to the censure, until it is withdrawn or its invalidity is made evident.[1]

Canonists also hold that a censure *notoriously* unjust is invalid,[2] as are likewise those promulgated against the will of the superior,[3] or for alleged disobedience in maintaining a privilege,[4] or which contain an intolerable error, — as when something unlawful or impossible is commanded, or something good in itself is forbidden.[5]

Having stated these principles which must be our guides, it remains to consider what should be the conduct of one of the faithful who has been subjected to the penalty of an excommunication.

[1] Innocent IV., loc. cit., cap. *Dolet a nonnullis*, and cap. *Per super.*, p. clix; Reiffenstuel, tit. 39, t. v., p. 388; Zitelli, cap. v., art. 1, p. 505; Billuart, de Censuris, D. i., a. 5, tom. ix., p. 489. The reader will find Schmalzgrueber (pars iv., t. 39, de Sent. Exc., tom. ix., pp. 412, 413, n. 80–83) very clear on these points. St. Augustine (in his sermon 351, on the utility of doing penance) has a beautiful passage embodying this teaching, and entreating the accused to submit in humility and patience, though reprobating condemnation that is imposed outside the law and order of the Church. (Tom. v., altera pars, pp. 1545–6, cap. iv., Nos. 9 and 10. Tom. xxxix. of Patrology.)

[2] Panormitanus, c. vi., tom. vii., 111; Prieras, i. 356.

[3] Prieras, loc. cit.

[4] Panormitanus, viii., 180; Fagnanus, cap. *Responso*, 98, 115, tom. iv., 195; St. Antoninus, c. 73, n. 11, p. 382 (2).

[5] Sandæus, c. xl., *Per tuas*, ii. 1213; St. Antoninus, c. 73, n. 8, p. 382 (1); Prieras, i. 358; Schmalzgrueber, pars iv., t. 39, tom. xi., 426, n. 115; Bucceroni, p. 13.

Unless the sentence is revoked by a qualified power, there is only one way of release from the bonds of a censure really incurred, and that is through the absolution granted by competent authority, which, in the case of a censure *ab homine*, by the Pope, means only the Sovereign Pontiff, or one especially delegated by him for this purpose. Neither the amendment nor the death of the delinquent can raise the ban. The contrary proposition was formally condemned by the Holy See.[1] Only the power of the Keys, by which the bond is formed, can break it. If one is bound by different censures, the absolution must express the cause of these. As a reparation for the sake of the people who have known the offence, the absolution and the oath or solemn promise of amendment by the accused must be made public. If absolution be given, as it can be, in danger of death (*articulo mortis*) by any priest, he must exact from the delinquent a promise of amendment and reparation for the scandal given; and there must be some authentic announcement to this effect.[2]

[1] Decrees of March 18, 1666, and August 28, 1794.

[2] On the subject of absolution from censures, the reader is referred to St. Raymundus, l. iii., t. 33, s. 3, pp. 393, 395; St. Thomas, In 4 Sent. D. xviii., q. 2, a. 5, and Supplementum, q. xxi., a. 4; q. xxiv., a. 1–3; Devoti, l. iv., t. 21, Leander, t. 1, D. xi., qq. 1 *seq.*, tom. iv., pp. 77, 78; Schmalzgrueber, pars iv. t. 39, de Sent. Exc. xi., 423, n. 107; Ferraris, art. vii., n. 23, tom. iii. p. 363; Zitelli, cap. v., art. 1, p. 505; Fagnanus, de Sent. Excom., cap. 27, iv., pars 2, p. 159; Bailly, de Censuris, art. viii.; Scavini, de Censuris, n. 82; St. Alphonsus, l. vii., c. 1, n. 116

Regarding censures which are unjust or invalid, the following principles are sound: An unjust but valid censure binds in conscience and before the Church, and therefore absolution must be obtained.[1] An unjust and *notoriously* invalid censure binds neither before God nor man, and therefore there is no need for absolution.[2] A sentence that is invalid, but whose invalidity is not notorious, does not bind in conscience, but, according to that law which forbids us to give scandal, one who is so censured must *publicly* hold himself as excommunicated, until he is absolved or until he has sufficiently demonstrated the nullity of the censure so as to remove the

seq., tom. ii. pp. 820 *seq*; Leander, Tr. ii. D. xvii. passim, tom. iv., pp. 203 *seq.*; Bonacina, de Censuris, D. i., q. 3, p. 1, tom. i. 301 *seq.*; and canonists generally. Some authors contend that the delinquent must, as a necessary condition, ask to be absolved, but the more probable opinion follows the Angelic Doctor who teaches (loc. cit.) that as excommunication is a penalty, not depending on our will alone, as does sin, absolution from the former may be given even to an unwilling person, but it must be given, in order to free him. On this latter point there is no dissenting canonist or theologian. As to the obligation under which one censured lies of seeking freedom from his bond and sin by restoration to grace and communion, see Patuzzi, Tr. x., c. 9, con. 4, de Sacramentis, tom. vi., 325; St. Alphonsus, l. vii., c. 1, n. 130, tom. ii. 823; Craisson, tom. iv., lib. iii., c. 2, s. 8, n. 6438, p. 336.

[1] St. Antoninus, c. 73, n. 6, p. 382 (primo); St. Raymundus, l. iii., t. 33, s. 8, p. 402; Fagnanus, de Sent. Excom., cap. *Per tuas*, n. 11, tom. iv., 175 (2), and authorities generally.

[2] St. Raymundus, loc. cit.; canonists and theologians cited in note 2, p. 118.

danger of scandal, and to refute the charge of acting in disrespect to authority.[1]

[1] Gelasius, causa xii., q. 3, c. 46 (tom. lix., p. 150 of Patrology; and pp. 102–110, de Anathematis Vinculo); St. Antoninus, cap. 73, n. 12, p. 382 (secundo); De Palude, D. xviii., q. i., a. 3 (three authorities cited by Savonarola; see his letter, page 153, in which I have corrected some mistakes in Quetif's version); Innocent IV., l. v., p. cxlix, cap. *Cum voluntate;* Reiffenstuel, tit. 39, n. 42, tom. v., 388; Schmalzgrueber, pars iv., t. 39, de Sent. Exc. xi., 412, 413, n. 80–83; Salzano, c. viii., n. 12. p. 272; Leander, t. i., D. x., q. 31, tom. iv., p. 74; Lacroix, l. vii., c. 4, n. 84, tom. ii., 437; Bailly, de Censuris, art. 7; Cuniliati, ii., 358, 359; Billuart, de Censuris, D. i., a. v., tom. ix., 489 *seq.;* Concina (Theologia), l. iii., D. 1, c. 5, tom. x., p. 263. The oft-repeated sentiment of St. Gregory: "The sentence of the Pastor, whether just or unjust, must be feared," Concina and other authorities quote. They conclude that the Holy Pope is to be understood simply in the sense that the subject must respect authority, nor should he rashly or proudly contemn it, even when it is unjustly exercised. And this last-named canonist adduces the words of St. Augustine, to which Savonarola had appealed: "What matters it if a defiled conscience does not blot me out from the Book of Life?" and St. Jerome: "Before the Judgment, inquiry will be made, not according to the sentence of priests, but according to the manner of our lives."

We also deem it well to refer to the great Bishop of Hippo (de Vera Religione, c. 6, n. 11; tom. iii., pars prior, p. 128 (xxxiv. of Patrology)), who writes that, though examples are rare, they are more frequent than might be believed, of unjust and invalid exclusion from the Church of God. But the holy Doctor exhorts the persecuted one to patience, and adds that God, who sees in secret, will reward him, even while under the ban, for such trials work for the greater good of souls.

And that St. Gregory intended only this is evident from his own words in the same Homily (26th on the Gospels, n. 5 and 6, pp. 1200, 1201, tom. ii., of Patrology, lxvi.): "The case must be examined, before the power of binding and loosing is exercised, for then only is the absolution of the prelate true, when it follows the judgment of the Eternal Judge. The prelate deprives

We have said he must *publicly* hold himself as excommunicated, because, privately and in the presence of those who know his innocence, he may continue to act according to his rights and privileges, be they peculiar to the clergy or laity.[1]

There remains one more point for consideration. We shall dismiss it with a few words. With a person who has been declared excommunicated, and denounced as one to be avoided, it is not lawful for the faithful to hold religious communion before absolution has been granted or sufficient proof has been given that the censure inflicted was invalid. In the former case, the fact of absolution may be attested by general report, or on the evidence of even one witness who is reliable. Indeed, the statement by the accused himself that he has been freed from the censure will justify the people in holding communion with such a man if he is of delicate conscience, and otherwise worthy of belief.[2]

himself of the power of binding and loosing (that is, God does not ratify his act) when he exercises it merely after his own will, or through favor or hatred, and not for the rights of his subjects, binding the worthy, and loosing the undeserving, 'killing souls which should not die, and saving souls alive which should not live,' as saith the Prophet Ezechiel" (xiii. 19).

[1] Billuart, de Censuris, loc. cit.; Cuniliati, Tr. xv., c. 1, s. 6, ii., 358, 359; Cabassutius, l. v., c. 10, n. 12, p. 173. There is only one authority (Navarre) against this common opinion of canonists and theologians.

[2] St. Alphonsus, l. vii., c. 1, n. 146, tom. ii., p. 828, who quotes in support of his ruling Lacroix, Navarre, and other eminent authors.

From this teaching it is evident that the condition of one who has been invalidly excommunicated opens even an easier way to a just recognition of his freedom from censure, by the faithful, to whom the true state of the case has been made known. Once the facts have been established, such a person is in possession of all his rights as a Christian in full communion with the Church.

III.

DID THE FRIAR REALLY INCUR THE CENSURE OF EXCOMMUNICATION?

WITH the facts, as proved by history, understood, and having before us the principles of canon law that must guide us in our judgment of the case, we shall endeavor to apply these principles to the admitted facts, in the hope of finding a satisfactory answer to our inquiry. Our thesis proceeds entirely in the spirit of discussion of an open question. We have no intention to pass judgment, or to assume, even in the most remote way, to speak authoritatively. A decision on such a matter rests entirely with the Holy See, and it is not for us either to intimate what the action of the Church might be, or even to suggest that the question should be presented for consideration. We merely offer an argument bearing on a historical discussion in which points of canon law must be applied, and in this we are absolutely in submission to the mind and heart of Holy Mother Church.

That our readers may approach the consideration of this delicate problem in a becoming spirit, with clearness of mind and calmness of judgment, we ask them to dismiss all preconceived thoughts or

convictions as to the merit or demerit of the Friar, and to concentrate their attention on the essential facts which we have faithfully narrated, and on the principles stated of canon law and theology. All else is irrelevant. What Savonarola said or did before the issue of the Brief of excommunication, except as embodied in our narrative, has no bearing on the terms and conditions of this document, to which we must confine ourselves. All that he did or said subsequently to the issue of the ban has no bearing as to the validity of the censure, which must depend entirely on previous offences, and can in no manner be affected by succeeding acts. We also ask our readers to bear in mind that our discussion is one of law and fact, and that in such matters, neither faith nor morals being directly involved, the pontifical power, because of false information or deliberate deception imposed upon the Pope by wicked men,[1] or for other reasons,[2] might be exercised erroneously, unjustly, invalidly, without the infallibility of the Pope being questioned.

It is further necessary to recall the condition

[1] Sandæus, de Sent. Exc. cap. *A nobis*, 28, tom. ii., 1189; Fagnanus, de Sent. Exc. iv., 164; Benedict XIV., l. ix., cap. 8, p. 307.

[2] Speaking of the guiding power of God, watching over the Popes, Cardinal Newman adds: "In saying this, I am far from saying that Popes are never in the wrong, and are never to be resisted, or that their excommunications always avail. I am not bound to defend the policy or the acts of particular Popes, whether before or after the great revolt from their authority in the sixteenth century." (Letter to Duke of Norfolk, pp. 33 and 34.)

of the times and place with which we are dealing: the fifteenth century;[1] a country entirely Catholic, in which a peculiar combination of Church and State begot relationships between the spiritual and the civil authorities quite foreign to certain modern notions; in which a generous margin of liberty of speech prevailed among preachers and people; in which a familiarity on the part of the latter with ecclesiastical laws and usages was quite general; in which, finally, a deplorable laxity of discipline and morals prevailed, the history of which appals Catholics living under a saintly Pope, ruled by venerable Bishops, and served by a devoted clergy.

We must transport ourselves to Florence as it was more than four hundred years ago; we must close our eyes to the life and times around us, and opening them wide on the old life that is long dead, amid the scenes and among the men and the women of Savonarola's day, who were not easily scandalized because they had been so terribly scandalized; who were intimately acquainted with the facts and circumstances of the Friar's case; who loved and admired the great preacher, from whose hands they had received the Bread of

[1] The words of the English historian Freeman, writing of St. Thomas of Canterbury, are applicable: "The cause of diversity and controversy — a diversity and controversy most fatal to historic truth — is to be traced to the unhappy method of looking at the men of the twelfth century with the eyes of the nineteenth." (Historical Essays, first series, by Edward A. Freeman, London, 1871.) We warn our readers against this tendency and error. We are dealing with the fifteenth century, not with the nineteenth.

Life, while an absentee Archbishop left his flock to the care of a Vicar. The precise date cannot be ascertained, but shortly after the excommunication Brief was announced, there appeared a strikingly pathetic pleading, which Savonarola called the "Lamentation of the Spouse of Christ against lukewarm and false preachers; or an exhortation to the faithful to pray to the Lord for the renewal of the Church."[1] Of the unhappy condition of spiritual life then prevailing, the Friar's picture is not overdrawn. We deem its insertion here to be appropriate: —

"To whom shall I speak, or whither shall I turn, assailed as I am on all sides with reproach and contumely? The watchmen who go round about the city have found me, they have stricken and wounded me; they who keep watch upon the walls have taken my cloak from me. The tails of the venomous scorpions have fixed their stings in me. Wolves in the clothing of sheep have deceived my flock; and foxes are leagued with them by a mutual compact. The bleatings of the sheep, suspicious of deceit, are silenced by fear. The hirelings have deserted the flock, or have made a compact with the wolves. The watch-dog, faithful to his master, has revealed the enemy by his ceaseless barking, and all their indignation is turned against him. And now the war is waged in the light of day; and with hard-set brows, battling in their rage, they belch forth fire,

[1] In the supplement to Pico's Life of Savonarola, pp. 381–385, the original Latin is found, edited by Father Quetif.

and with dreadful gnashing of teeth their foaming madness burns, and their fetid breath is blown forth with portentous yawnings. The earth is torn up with their crooked claws, and the bristling-up of their back and of their hairy tails threatens terrible things.

"For they have said: 'Let us circumvent him, because he is unprofitable to us, and opposed to our works, and he reproaches us with our crimes against the law, and speaks evil against the sins of our way of life. He is burdensome to us even to behold, because his life is unlike other men's! For by the envy of the devil death entered into the world. But those who are on his side do like as he.'

"But whilst they are striving to do him greater hurt, they strike against the solid rock in which he lies hidden in security, and their rebounding darts are flung back against themselves. But what evil spirit has sown conflicting purposes among the ranks of brethren once inseparable? Who has nourished hatred? Is Christ divided among you? Is He the God of dissension and not of peace? Who has taught a new and adulterous generation to lie in wait for the favor of princes, to solicit the rich with tickling of the ears (flattery), to go round about the streets and squares, to deceive the souls of silly women and of the simple-minded, to calumniate good works out of envy?

"Is this what we learn from the example of our ancestors? Does our holy calling countenance such deeds as these? Does your state and profession, does the humility that appears in your inclined shoulders, does that outward show of sanctity portend such conduct? Should you not rather have stretched forth

helpful hands to gain Christ crucified; to gain Him for yourselves, and also to plant Him in the hearts of men, — Christ, whom only the pious watcher and the devout multitude proclaim together; whom they follow; whose steps they trace to imitate Him? Do the ways of men and these fatal times call for approval and applause, that the truth may lurk in hiding and be utterly trodden down?

"Of course I am not ignorant that there are many good men in every Order; but violence is done them lest they should know the truth; or else, overwhelmed by the lukewarm, they are forced to be silent. 'How long wilt Thou be mindful of us unto the end?'

"Yea, rather: 'Arise, and have mercy on Sion; for it is time to have mercy on her, for the time has come.' But do you, 'generation of vipers' and, as the Lord saith, 'like unto whited sepulchres, which without, indeed, seem to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness,' blush at least at your own consciences, which cry out against you with us, and restrain your virulent tongues. Be ashamed of your rivalries, dissensions, and discords, which can no longer be disguised nor hidden. Behold, I pray you, the fruits of the meek flock, and the good works which are forced upon your eyes like a wall, flung against them like brazen battering-rams. Behold the men of kindly heart, humble, tranquil, joyful even in adversity, of one mind, sober, chaste, modest, frequent at the Divine worship and at the Sacraments, constant in deeds of charity.

"On the other hand, look at your own fellows and your followers, who are set against the truth and the faithful

watch-dog of Christ; behold them, proud, ambitious, greedy of gain, adulterers, gluttons, and idlers; and worse than all these are they who, forgetful of their profession, secret apostates in sheep's clothing, lie rotting in malice and ambition. Look, then, and see at last, if only a voice may prevail to pierce the hardened ears of the asps.

"But come, ye good priests and religious, and also ye good secular people, of whom I know there is everywhere a great multitude,[1] 'Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He send good laborers into His field;' yea, that He winnow His corn and cleanse it and separate the husks and burn the cockle; for the days are near and they are rapidly coming on, when my Beloved will reveal his Arm, to execute judgment and mercy on the earth. Lift up your heads and see that the summer is nigh and the harvest is whitening.

"Therefore my little children, my joy and my crown, looking for the blessed hope, for the sake of all the faithful and of even these your adversaries, do ye ever implore Him whom my soul loveth, that He quickly return to me.

"Come, come, my Beloved, for I languish with love, that I may repose with Thee in the midday, and my soul may find rest in thy bosom.

"Who livest and reignest unto ages of ages. Amen."

[1] Here and in the third preceding paragraph, not to mention other portions of the Friar's writings, we find a refutation, *in his own words*, of Pastor's wholesale condemnation: "He (Savonarola) overlooked, in his passionate indignation, the immense amount of good which remained, and *seeing only the evil*," etc. (History of the Popes, vol. v., p. 183, Eng. trans.)

Realizing, in a manner, the condition of affairs to which we have adverted, our readers will have an intelligent understanding of a distant prospect that otherwise must mean confusion confounded.

Having thus placed before them the facts of history and the principles of canon law, they will be fully prepared to hear our answer to the question: Did Savonarola really incur the censure of excommunication?

The situation, sad and delicate, in which Savonarola found himself on the publication of the Brief of May 13, 1497, is probably unique in the history of the Church.[1] But we believe that he conducted himself according to the rules which saintly and learned men had drawn, and according to principles which are higher than personal sanctity or science, namely, those of right and law; and that, in following the accepted authorities of his time, names still famous and venerable, he did not err.

Let us briefly summarize. Having, during an apostolate of extraordinary zeal and unsparing labor, wrought a great change in the spiritual life of Florence, the contradictions and persecutions of which St. Paul speaks arose against the Friar. Powerful influences set to work to have him removed from Florence, unscrupulous maligners carrying their deception even into the Pope's palace,

[1] Bayonne, p. 116.

persuading Alexander that Savonarola's doctrine was pernicious, that he disturbed the State, that he was insulting to the Holy See. They hoped, having induced Alexander to call the Friar to Rome, to kill him on the way and this was well known to Savonarola, through his friends. Failing, they had his preaching in Florence interdicted, and an inquiry made into his "false doctrine" by an Apostolic Commission. Then came the reunion with Lombardy, next the letter of the Pope, in which the Friar's doctrine was denounced as pernicious, though Alexander had before praised his preaching; and finally the Tusco-Roman scheme, by which the irregular were to be mixed up with the fervent, the latter to be scattered about as a leaven among the disorderly friars. This scheme Savonarola held to be against charity, nor would he approve, though he submitted to, the new law. Having been stigmatized as a son of perdition, and declared excommunicated, he kept silent for six months, so far as preaching or publicly celebrating Mass was concerned. Meanwhile he tried to defend himself, showing the evil work of enemies, who only raged the more. They claimed that his silence was the result of human fear, not of piety; and as vice grew and flourished, Savonarola determined to prove to them, not only how little fear he knew, but how truly from piety he had acted; and this with danger to his life, as the event proved. During the whole contest the

Friar, with much moderation and prudence, charged that the wicked men who misinformed Alexander were the cause of all the trouble, and on them he threw all blame.

In the Brief of May 13, 1497, addressed to various bodies, of none of which was Savonarola a member, we have the first evidence of the official announcement that he had incurred the penalty threatened by the Pope against all who would oppose his commands and regulations, as promulgated on November 7, 1496. Thus, without warning, without citation of the accused, without proof of the offence,[1] by a document irregularly published, Savonarola was denounced as "a son of perdition" and declared excommunicate, on the following grounds: because "he preached pernicious doctrine, to the scandal and loss of souls;" he refused to go to Rome, when summoned by the Pope; he declined to unite St. Mark's Convent with the newly formed Tusco-Roman Congregation.

From the terms of this Brief it is plain that Alexander did not, by it, inflict any censure on Savonarola; he simply announced to Florence and the general public that Savonarola, because of the alleged offences, was excommunicated; and as such he was solemnly branded for having violated the pontifical decree of November 7, 1496. No other papal documents have been discovered, nor do contemporary writers or subsequent historians

[1] See pages 113, 114.

refer to any other Briefs bearing on the case. There was no Bull of excommunication issued against him, either of inflictive or declaratory sentence. There was no process, proof, or judgment, according to canonical requirements.[1] There was no sentence of any kind. The letter to the Florentine communities, commonly known as the Brief of excommunication, was simply a command by the Pontiff to proclaim as excommunicated one who had been represented to Alexander as having incurred the censure promulgated by him on November 7, 1496. On this false information the Pope was induced to authorize an order giving to such alleged fact publicity, and declaring that the censure said to have been incurred had public binding force. As we have already seen, it is probable that this Brief was subsequently issued against the intention and will of Alexander. In an age of forgeries, when even papal documents were not always free from the terrible taint,[2] and under the peculiar circumstances with which this document was smuggled into Florence, while its accredited bearer, the bitter enemy of the venerable man whom it stigmatized as a son of perdition, failed to discharge his canonical duty, the people, following many of the clergy, were justified in doubting it and regarding it as of questionable authenticity. Thus, as Nardi, an eye-witness, tells us, the Brief was published only in the churches

[1] See page 116. [2] See page 80, note 2.

of those who were inimical to St. Mark's by enemies of the Friar for their own base purposes.[1]

Let us examine the Brief in detail. Grave objections may be brought against it, as destitute of canonical requirements safeguarding the rights of the members of Christ's Mystical Body, but we have no desire to press them unduly. We desire only to set in a clear light the facts of the case.

The reader is reminded that to no one of the offences charged against Savonarola nor to all combined was the penalty of excommunication attached by law. Hence a simple declaration even by the Pope that such faults had been committed by an individual would not subject that individual to the penalty of excommunication. To one of these offences[2] a censure *ab homine* had been attached, and in such form that the Pope's announcement of the fact of contumacious guilt would have been sufficient to have designated the sinner named as excommunicated, provided such declaration had been based on truth.

A careful reading of the Brief will also convince one that no date is assigned as indicating the time when Savonarola fell under the ban. In what way

[1] L. ii., p. 64; Quetif, p. 275.

[2] Namely, Savonarola's alleged refusal to unite St. Mark's to the new Congregation. Here we designate the count as it is presented in the Brief; but in the succeeding text we shall duly note a grave discrepancy, showing that this offence was impossible.

he incurred the censure is not precisely stated, nor is the vagueness relieved by the recitation of the charges, covering, as they do, a period of almost sixteen months, and embracing some counts to which no penalty of censure had been attached by the Pope. And this indefiniteness, this lack of particulars stands to-day as it did in the Friar's hour of humiliation, of trial, of condemnation. History has revealed no fact, document, or point of law that can add one iota of proof against him.

The first indictment is that Savonarola preached pernicious doctrine to the loss of souls. We feel morally certain that Alexander VI. did not dictate this cruelly unjust and untruthful declaration. It is clearly the work of the Friar's enemies. Several times, previously and subsequently to the excommunication, the Pope had stated that he found no fault with the Friar's doctrine,[1] and intelligent readers of his life and works know now that his writings contain no erroneous doctrine. The necessity of defending the great preacher from the accusation of being a forerunner of Luther, is no longer urgent. The charge of "pernicious teaching, scandalous, and dangerous to souls," has no basis whatever. Even were the charge sustained, it is not one that necessarily brought in its train excommunication effective by the fact, and therefore on this count Savonarola could not have been excommunicated.

[1] Letter of March 4, 1497, in Gherardi, 194 *seq.*

The next item is that of disobedience to a papal command, given on July 21, 1495, requiring Savonarola to proceed to Rome, to which command, as imposed under the obligation of obedience only, no censure had been attached, and through which, therefore, no censure could be incurred, even had such command been disobeyed. Furthermore, his reasonable excuses had been promptly sent and graciously accepted by the Pope.[1] The renewal[2] of the precept renewed the obligation, but under the conditions expressed by the Pontiff, and on the evidence already submitted, it is clear that Savonarola's enemies rendered the fulfilment of Alexander's conditions impossible. That a journey to Rome by the Friar "in honor and safety" was not subsequently in his power is beyond contradiction. We reject, not only as abhorrent, but as utterly without proof, the view of those who claim that the Pope had ordered Savonarola to Rome, that he might be killed, either there or on the way. As to his resumption of preaching in the Lent of 1496, we have given the authorities proving his obedience and submission to the Holy See.[3]

[1] See Brief of October 16, 1495. His Holiness repeated this fact in the Brief of May 13, 1497.

[2] By Brief of October 16, 1495.

[3] See note on page 52. Consult also Appendix: "The Question of Obedience."

After recounting the plots and slanders of the enemies of Savonarola to effect his excommunication Pico della Miran-

The charge of hindering the union of St. Mark's with the newly devised Tusco-Roman province alone remains, and if this point can be settled in favor of the Friar, the difficulties of the case, so far as the validity of the censure is concerned, disappear. The Brief of excommunication issued May 13, 1497, declares that, Savonarola having persisted in the course of action which he had previously followed, the Pope, "therefore, in a sec-

dola writes: "For myself, having learned of the excommunication, I could scarcely believe that from so celebrated a place such a sentence would be fulminated against a man whom I know to be enriched with learning, and adorned with all virtues, and especially obedience (obedientissimus), without at least the appearance of truth to support it." (Quetif, p. 32.) And this was the opinion of the learned and the virtuous of the time. Against them were the *Arrabbiati*, the *Compagnacci*, the *Medici*, and all the enemies of good government, personal morality, and public decency. And as, according to an established canon, the opinion and judgment of the virtuous in such matters should be preferred to that of the wicked, it is easy to decide as to the character and importance of Savonarola's supporters and opponents. For other contemporary testimony to his obedience, see *Scelta*, p. 3. To the words of Pico we add an apposite reflection of the scholarly Luotto: "When I recall by what hypocrisy, calumny, fraud, Alexander was induced to sign such a Brief, I can believe without further evidence all that Pastor and others tell us of the wickedness of the Renaissance period. And I can better understand how the worst in Machiavelli could be the product of such an age. Some might feel surprised that the Faith did not utterly decline. I always prefer to remember that the Church is a Divine institution, and that the power and dignity of the papacy are impersonal. I understand more clearly than ever why God has not permitted the action of men to have power over His Vicar in matters of dogma and Christian morals" (p. 528).

ond letter of November 7, 1496, commanded that in virtue of holy obedience and under pain of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, to be incurred *ipso facto*, he should unite the Convent of St. Mark with the Tusco-Roman Congregation recently formed and erected by us." [1]

These words would indicate that the Pontiff's motive was to punish Savonarola, to inflict a penalty on him because of alleged disobedience, by forcing him into a condition of life repugnant to the strict and reformed observance he then followed. However, let us compare the terms of command, as expressed in the Brief of excommunition, May 13, 1497, with the definite and precise words of the Brief of precept, November 7, 1496. As penal and odious things, by an axiom of theology, are to be rigorously interpreted, we shall confine ourselves to the decisive clause of the Brief of precept, taken in its strict and legal sense, for on the proper understanding of this clause we must consider the excommunication. The words of the Pope are: "Moreover we wish, and by the tenor of this present letter strictly commanding, in virtue of holy obedience and under penalty of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, we forbid each and every one, of whatsoever condition, state, dignity, or grade, to contradict this letter, in any way, either themselves or through others, directly or indirectly, on any assumed title or color, or to

[1] See Brief of May 13, 1497.

dare or presume to place any impediment in the way of its fulfilment." [1]

The distinction between the two sentences which we have quoted respectively from the Briefs of May 13, 1497, and November 7, 1496, is one of marked and important difference, especially in view of the penalty attached. Savonarola was not commanded to unite the Convent of St. Mark to the new Congregation. The fusion had been accomplished by the Pope, whose power was all-sufficient, nor did its exercise depend, in any manner, on the consent of the Dominican Order in its head or members. It was needless, therefore, and it would have been superfluous for the Sovereign Pontiff to have commanded a subordinate to do what he by his supreme power had already effected: "And by our Apostolic authority we decree that hereafter, for all future time, the five convents mentioned, as separated by us from the said Congregation, and the other said convents of the Tuscan and Roman Province, as well as you, priors and brethren now living in these convents, *are by us constituted as one Congregation*, to be known as the Tusco-Roman Province of regular observance."

Of the charge, therefore, as mentioned in the Brief of excommunication, May 13, 1497, of having refused to unite St. Mark's with the new province, Savonarola was not guilty, because he

[1] See the Brief of November 7, 1496.

had received no command to that effect in the Brief of precept, November 7, 1496, to which the excommunication had been attached, and consequently he could not have incurred a censure on such a ground.

But he was ordered, with all the other members of his community, and with all concerned, that he should place nò obstacle in the way of the pontifical decree, and this precept obliged him under pain of excommunication. If he disobeyed it, in any manner, directly, or indirectly, he incurred the censure and was excommunicated. We are now at the vital point of our inquiry.

Remembering Savonarola as a religious bound by vows, many have assumed from general principles of the spiritual life that he should have labored to remove all obstacles, to persuade his community to submit to the union without appeal. He had not been commanded to do this, and therefore by failing to do it, no matter how he may *seem* to have been wanting in the perfection of religious obedience, he was not disobedient, nor did he incur a censure. Moreover, he was entitled to his honest, intelligent opinion as to the motive, purpose, and feasibility of the union; and, knowing the facts as he did, and having the instinct as well as the experience of the religious reformer, he could not conscientiously applaud the work that had been done, nor could he urge others to an opposite view. In allowing the

respectful petition of the community to be addressed to the Pope, he simply abstained from infringing on their absolute right to have recourse to the Supreme Pastor. In a like spirit he dealt with the Florentine people, many of whom were strongly and personally interested in the new Congregation, because of their friends and relatives who belonged to the Community of St. Mark.

This attitude towards others he maintained throughout. He sought neither directly nor indirectly to oppose the Pope's plan; he strove only by prayer and just appeal to the Sovereign Pontiff, to have the acknowledged union rescinded. We say acknowledged union, because the Brief of Alexander had received its most effectual recognition from Savonarola, who, on its receipt, at once made known its contents and obligations to the community,— assuredly an evidence of submission and obedience, of a spirit absolutely sincere, open, and honorable. On the appointment of the Vicar for the new province, Savonarola at once relinquished his office as head of St. Mark's Congregation and accepted the jurisdiction placed over him, in the same spirit in which he had acknowledged the authority of B. Sebastian Maggi, when St. Mark's Convent was attached to the Lombard Congregation. And in the same spirit of esteem and reverence which Sebastian had manifested for Savonarola, Father James of Sicily, the new Vicar General, also held him, and declined to transfer

him from Florence. In fact, though no one disobeyed the Pope, the Tusco-Roman province was never fully organized. All concerned knew the situation as one extremely precarious, and those in authority made no changes.[1]

What was Savonarola's attitude towards the new Congregation?[2] We set aside the canonical plea of intolerable error, touching the purpose under command, when the fusion was accomplished. The plan of union was neither evil nor immoral in itself, nor may it be asserted that it was not within the competence of the Pope to merge the various convents included in the scheme. And as there can be no question of the *possibility* of fulfilling Alexander's commands, supposing he had desired their fulfilment, we believe that the censure cannot be considered invalid on this score. But it is now evident that Savonarola's view of the case was judicious, that there was an inherent defect in the papal command; and history has vindicated the Friar's judgment. Moreover, his inalienable right of conscience, his

[1] After Savonarola's death the independence of St. Mark's Congregation was restored, and for more than one hundred years it continued to be the model, the nucleus, the strength, and the glory of the entire Dominican Order. (Marchese: San Marco, p. 111.) And to the present time it preserves its integrity, despite the misfortunes that have befallen religious life in Italy. The actual Vicar is Father John Lottini, who has made so just and skilful a defence of his persecuted predecessor.

[2] The reader will recur, with advantage, to our historical review of the facts, and to the chapter "Question of Censures."

right to pass judgment, not on his superior's commands, but on his own conscientious relationship to them, must not be impugned. Nor can it be justly alleged that his maintenance of his opinion, his strong appeal in a canonical way to the Sovereign Pontiff, constituted opposition of a kind liable to censure. Had he failed in any respect that would have rendered him amenable to the penalty, his watchful enemies would have promptly notified the fact to Alexander. There is no evidence of any such charge nor even of any forgery, from which they would not have shrunk, had it been considered advisable. Savonarola might well doubt that the Pope had been wisely counselled in the move; he had a right to feel that the Vicar of Christ would not wish to undo the work of Saints. In his own conscience he had a tribunal delicate and trustworthy, and, enlightened as it was by experience, by true piety and great learning, he could have resisted what he believed to be an infringement of a sacred privilege, namely, the opportunity of rigorously observing his Order's laws; he could justly have refused a change which foreboded evil, loss of reputation and honor, as well as other serious injuries to himself and to those whom he had received in religion's name, under certain solemn pledges; he could have legally declined to accept an arrangement inspired by the hatred of his enemies, which threatened the peace of religion, which indeed practically represented a dispensa-

tion against the greater good, a diminution of his obligations, against his will, and without present advantage or probable future compensation.[1] Accordingly he would have been justified in a positive refusal had the matter been placed before him as a command. But he had not been allowed any choice; he yielded, therefore, and was not disobedient. He waived, in practice, all the rights conferred on him by canon law[2] and chose the highest standard, that of submission, — full, sincere; and then he appealed. In the meantime, while his will was subordinated, in complete acceptance of a condition of affairs imposed upon him, his conscience, his intellect were not able to reject the light, nor could he refuse to yield assent to the truth as he saw it. In deploring the threatened ruin of his beloved St. Mark's,— a gloomy prospect unrelieved by the hope of reform among the irregular to whom his lot was joined, — he was sustained by authorities and principles that are essential to the religious life. His attitude was that of sound piety and impressive edification.

We may describe his critical position as one of complete submission to the Pope in all that concerned the externals, as jurisdiction and the recognition of the newly formed province; but in his conscience he claimed the right to be faithful to

[1] Consult Appendix on Obedience; Ferraris, tom. vii., p. 246, n. 22.

[2] Compare conclusions in Appendix on Obedience.

his higher pledges, his vow to lead a truly fervent, religious life; and from this principle, though the Pope might disband the whole Order, he could not oblige the humblest subject to depart.

Let the reader remember that the Pope's Brief of November 7, 1496, dealt with no question of the universal discipline of the Church, nor with a matter of faith or morals; his action was not *ex cathedra*. The question was one purely local and particular, touching disciplinary measures in one portion of a religious Order. Even had Savonarola denied the authority of the Pope in this particular case, had he opposed Alexander's proceedings, such resistance could not have the odious character that is rightly attributed to opposition to a papal act of universal jurisdiction, or regarding a matter of universal import in the domain of faith or morals.

Thus far, as we have seen, Savonarola acted with extreme caution. An expert canonist,[1] a profound theologian, well advised by capable men, he made no slip, he kept his feet in the path of safety, free from the entanglements of the ban. He did not waver in his steadfast opinion as to the unwisdom of the recent amalgamation, but he remained passive. No acts can be alleged against him as falling under the pontifical prohibition. It cannot be proved that he ridiculed the new Congregation.

[1] Savonarola was not only learned in the law, civil and ecclesiastical, but among his unpublished writings are several treatises on the canons, in which his mastery of the subject is clear. See Villari, i., pp. xxii, xxiv; and Luotto, chapter xxvi.

One passage in a sermon[1] in which he referred to the various orders that had been given, and compared them to moves on a chess-board, has been so misunderstood. But it must be observed that in this sermon, as always, he attributes all his troubles, not to the Pope himself, but to the calumniators who made the Pontiff the unconscious instrument of their perverse intentions. In this judgment we think he was right. In their day they specified no charge; they did what cowardice and vindictiveness have often done; they persistently slandered, sweepingly maligned, in the hope that some at least of their defilement would cleave to the object of their hatred. But they acted not wisely, though they extorted from a harassed Pontiff a declaration of whose falsity he was not aware.

A strong light has since been shed on their dark deeds; and history, walking under the guidance of canon law, and seeking only the truth, has made manifest that Savonarola was neither disobedient nor heretical, and that no excommunication lay against him on any of the counts enumerated in the Brief of May 13, 1497. He did not defy the papal summons ordering him to go to Rome; he did not resume his preaching until he had been assured of Alexander's permission; he did not resist the formation of the Tusco-Roman Province, in any manner prohibited by law or right; he did

[1] The second on Exodus.

not teach heresy or scandalous doctrine. These facts we have clearly established.

To the question, therefore, which we have placed at the head of this chapter, the reader is prepared to answer negatively and emphatically. And this conclusion receives a solemn confirmation from the Friar's own declaration that he was not entangled in any censures, — a declaration that comes to us with an impressiveness peculiarly sacred in the light of his ending.[1]

[1] See his letter of June 19, 1497.

IV.

DID THE FRIAR GIVE SCANDAL?

HAVING proved that Savonarola was not excommunicated, we desire to meet the objection of those who ask, did not the Friar give scandal by openly defying the Brief of excommunication?

For the guidance of the reader we consider it necessary to summarize the teaching of theology on scandal. The popular understanding of scandal is often inexact. Its precise meaning, as given by divines, is conveyed in the definition of St. Thomas which is recognized as standard by all teachers of theology: "Any word or deed less correct giving to another the occasion of spiritual ruin."[1] Paraphrasing the Angelic Doctor's pithy and comprehensive expression, we say that as scandal etymologically signifies a stumbling-block or an impediment, theologically it means any occasion in the spiritual life bringing spiritual harm, by stumble or fall, because of the words or actions of another who has set a hindrance to good, or an inducement to evil, before his neighbor.

[1] 2æ 2æ, q. 43, art. 1.

Thus, as scandal is opposed to mercy and charity, the obligation of avoiding it is grave; the precept of the Apostle is precise, even as to the appearance of evil, from which we must abstain.[1] A distinction, however, must be made. Scandal truly *given*, namely, that which comes from the words or deeds of another, evil in themselves or having the appearance of evil, is different from scandal simply *taken*, quite beyond another's intention, and quite apart from the nature of his words or deeds. This *received* scandal arises either from ignorance or weakness, and then it is known as *scandalum pusillorum*, or "the scandal of the weak;" or it is, by evil interpretation, the offspring of malice, and as such it is called *pharisaical* scandal, in memory of the Pharisees who declared that they were scandalized by the most holy words and deeds of our Blessed Redeemer.[2] This brings us to the root of our question, namely, to what extent is one obliged to relinquish spiritual goods, to avoid passive scandal, or the scandal that people might take. St. Thomas will be our guide.

Spiritual goods necessary for salvation, and which cannot be abandoned without sin, must not be relinquished to avoid scandal of any kind or to anyone, because charity first obliges a man to seek his own chief spiritual welfare before that of his neighbor.

[1] Thessalonians v. 22.
[2] St. Matthew xv. 12.

Spiritual goods which are not necessary for salvation, and which can therefore be relinquished without sin, should not be renounced on account of pharisaical scandal, if there is sufficient cause for immediate action or for not delaying such works. The reason of this conclusion the Angelic Doctor finds in the malice from which persons so scandalized would sin, a condition not of necessity requiring the help of others, and from which they can easily deliver themselves. Otherwise such persons would be encouraged in impeding their neighbor's spiritual welfare, and consequently the scandal that they would take must not be considered, according to our Blessed Lord's own declaration when His disciples feared that the Pharisees would be scandalized by His words and works. "Let them alone; they are blind and the leaders of the blind." [1]

In this conclusion of the Angelic Doctor a condition is expressed, — "if there is sufficient cause for immediate action, or for not delaying such works;" because it is the dictate of charity, which shrinks from aught that may offend God, that without cause we should not give even to one who will sin of his own malice, an occasion for wrongdoing.

Spiritual goods which are not necessary for salvation, if no danger threatens us, or if the welfare of the public does not otherwise demand, should

[1] St. Matthew xv. 14.

be concealed or deferred, on account of scandal of the weak, till the likelihood of such scandal is removed, through explanation or instruction. This obligation springs from charity, which commands us to aid our neighbor in spiritual need, whenever we can conveniently succor him.

Having given an explanation that reasonable men would regard as satisfactory, it may be presumed that those who still take scandal are actuated by malice, and for them we should not sacrifice such spiritual goods, though they are only of counsel. Should it happen, however, that because of stupidity, or because they are swayed by other reasons, or led by force of old habit, some persons cannot grasp our explanation, it may be urged that, if the spiritual goods in question can be deferred, without serious loss to ourselves or danger to the public weal, we should wait in the hope of further enlightening such "weak ones." But having given ample time and sufficient instruction in the spirit of meekness,[1] having gravely considered all the circumstances urging us to action or restraining us from it; having discreetly and maturely decided that matters of great private utility are involved, our own spiritual interests are at stake, the Faith is threatened, or the welfare of souls is seriously endangered, — we may judge that only does the word of the Apostle then specially hold, "Be ye zealous for

[1] Galatians vi. 1.

the better gifts," [1] but that works otherwise of counsel have become of necessity, and therefore must not be omitted. Thus theologians stand on the well-known sentiment of the great Pope St. Gregory: "If scandal is taken from the truth, it is better to let such scandal come, rather than to relinquish the truth." And this is according to our Lord's own words,[2] and to the declaration of that great champion of authority, "the last of the Fathers," St. Bernard, who quotes these words of Pope Gregory, and commenting on them says: "I would not be silent when vice was to be rebuked, and truth defended." [3] This salutary principle does not affect the question of the mere timeliness of a sermon, or of the advisability of preaching in general; it concerns rather the Gospel vitally, and involves the interests of souls supremely considered in a grave emergency.

Nor can it be charged against those who act according to the principles enunciated, that through their knowledge the weak brother perishes,[4] for after such instruction the weak brother becomes a pharisee, and the scandal which he maliciously takes may be permitted. [5]

[1] 1 Corinthians xii. 31.

[2] St. Matthew xiii. 14.

[3] Epistola 78, tom. i., p. 38.

[4] 1 Corinthians viii. 11.

[5] We give the doctrine of St. Thomas, 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 43, art. 1–8, on which the reader may also consult the fuller comment of Cajetan and Sylvius; St. Alphonsus, l. ii., t. 3, c. ii., a. 1 and 2, tom.

Having laid down these admitted principles of moral theology, we now proceed to answer the pertinent question which forms this chapter-heading by presenting the Friar's argument as expressed in a letter of uncertain date, but written subsequently to the publication of the ban, and addressed to a Dominican who had submitted to him a question as to the validity of the censure :[1]—

i., pp. 239–245; Billuart, de Vitiis Charitati Oppositis, D. vii., a. vi., sec. 4, tom. v., pp. 378 *seq.*; Concina (Theologia), l. i., D., 9, c. 5, tom. 2, pp. 111 *seq.*; Wigandt, Tract. vii., Ex. vii., q. 32, p. 161; Castro Palao, t. vi., D. vi., p. 16, n. 3–6, tom. i., pp. 484, 485; Salmanticenses, t. xxi., de Præceptis, c. viii., p. 5, tom. v., p. 304; Layman, l. ii., t. iii., c. 13, n. 8, tom. i. p. 182; Sporer, t. v. in v. Præcept. c. 1, s. 1, Reg. 2 and 3, tom. ii., p. 89; Antoine, c. vi., s. 4, q. 4, tom. i., p. 207; Suarez, de Charitate, D. x., s. 3, n. 7, 9, tom. xii., p 727; Lacroix, l. ii., t. 3, c. 2, D. 5, a. 2, tom. i., pp. 112, 113; Palmieri (who says that not even indifferent works are to be abandoned), p. 212; Patuzzi, Tract. iv., de Virt. c. xviii., tom. iii., 109–112; Varceno, t. viii., a. 3, s. 3, tom. i., p. 375; Aertnys, l. ii., t. iii., p. ii, tom. i. pp. 143 *seq.*; Haine, de Virtutibus, s. 3, art. 1 *seq.*, tom. i., pp. 320 *seq.*; Lehmkuhl, tom. i., 379; Claremontenses, tom. v., 521, 522; Cuniliati, Tr. iv., c. 9, s. 6, de Decal. Præceptis; Kenrick, Tr. xiii., de Virt. Theol. p. iii, c. 6, n. 125; Reiffenstuel (Theologia), Tr. iv., D. vii., q. 2, n. 26, 28, tom. i. 107; Roncaglia, Tr. vi., c. 6, q. 7, tom. i., p. 185; Neyraguet, pp. 108, 109.

The tract on Charity, as it deals with scandal, by these authors, may be more fully consulted, as well as moral theologians in general. We have given the strictest teaching, for in favor of an easier interpretation of the law on scandal and the omission of good works, we could refer to names not inconspicuous among theologians.

[1] Quetif (pp. 191 *seq.*) gives the Latin. The name of the Father to whom the letter was addressed is not known. We refer the reader to Savonarola's letter of June 19, 1497.

"You ask me, dearly beloved Brother, whether an excommunication of this kind, which, within the past few days we have shown to be unjust,[1] ought to be observed, at least in public. On this point I shall let Peter de Palude[2] and the Archbishop of Florence[3] speak openly for me in their own clear words: 'An unjust excommunication need not be feared on account of the penalty of the law, because according to truth he incurs no penalty of law who does not observe a sentence that is null,[4] but on account of fault, by reason of scandal. But, as Boetius says,[5] 'there are some ideas or notions common to all, others that are special to the learned.' When, therefore, it is known to the learned that a sentence is null, although among the people it is not understood, a man may disregard such a sentence in private, but in public he ought to observe it, until the danger of scandal has been reasonably removed; as when one who has been publicly excommun-

[1] Savonarola uses this word after the manner of the older canonists, in the same sense as invalid. Modern doctors distinguish the terms, but their conclusions substantially agree with those of the writers who preceded the Council of Trent. In his sermons, the twenty-second on Amos, the first and the second on Exodus, the tenth on Ruth and Micheas, and that on Aggeus, Savonarola develops the teaching of St. Thomas on law, justice, and charity in an admirable manner, clearly showing how all ordinations against justice and charity lack binding force, because they are contrary to the natural and the Divine law, which is eternal.

[2] In 4 Lib. Sent. D. xviii., q. 1, art. 3.

[3] St. Antoninus, Summa, pars. iii., t. 24, c. 73.

[4] Thus Savonarola shows that he is in harmony with the ancient canonists in using the terms "unjust" and "null" indifferently.

[5] In Librum Quomodo Substantiæ Bonæ Sunt, p. 1317.

icated and publicly denounced shows to the contrary and publicly that the sentence does not hold (for example, because of an appeal, or for any other just reason), for then there can no longer be the scandal of the weak, but only pharisaical scandal, and this is to be contemned.'

"In the Decretals, Gelasius [1] says: 'If one is censured, let him put away his error (or sin) and the sentence will be cancelled. But if he has been unjustly (invalidly) sentenced, he ought not to regard it, insomuch as no one can be bound by an unjust sentence before God and His Church. He, therefore, who knows that he is in no manner bound, ought not to desire absolution.'

"Wherefore, since it has been for some time evident to all the people that this excommunication has been extorted by the wicked, through false accusations and persistent importunity, that they might have an easier way to follow their evil course; and since, through the letter recently published by me, I have shown the whole truth of this affair, thus removing from the people the danger of scandal and proving clearly the injustice of the sentence, I am not obliged to observe it in public, nor can any one be scandalized unless he wishes obstinately to proclaim himself a pharisee. And this can also be more fully understood from the words of John Gerson, that most learned and most religious man, whom the Parisians call the most Christian Doctor. In his Tract on Excommunications and Irregularities, he writes among other points, and elegantly, as fol-

[1] Gelasius, Episcopis Orientalibus de Damnatione Dioscori, p. 150.

lows:[1] 'Contempt of the Keys[2] can be traced only from legitimate power and from the legitimate use of that power by him who commands under threat of excommunication or interdict; for otherwise prelates would be able to impose whatever servitude they chose upon their subjects, if, even in their erroneous and unjust sentences, they should be always obeyed. And thus it is evident that the common saying, "The sentence of the prelate or judge, even when unjust (invalid) must be feared," needs qualification. Otherwise, it is not generally true that this means such a sentence must be sustained and not refuted; indeed there might be cases wherein such submission would be asinine patience and timidity, as foolish as that of the hare.

"'Contempt of the Keys[3] involves greater danger when the Sovereign Pontiff is concerned, because from the abuses of inferiors there is recourse to the Pope, on appeal. And if it be said that in like manner an appeal can be made from the Pope to a General Council, it was formerly declared, before the Councils of Pisa and Constance, that this was in no manner lawful, and they who so hold bring forward laws which to them seem very clear; but now it is vigorously asserted that this is heresy, condemned by a most special Constitution in the aforesaid Council of Constance, as elsewhere we have fully shown. It is admitted that, though lawful, yet for light matters there ought not to be an appeal to

[1] Tom. ii. 423.

[2] A canonical and theological expression signifying disregard or disobedience and contempt of the binding and loosing power of the Church.

[3] Gerson here uses this expression in the sense of abuse of power.

a Council, to which there cannot be such easy recourse as there can be to the Pope.[1]

"'Contempt of the Keys is not incurred in those cases in which the commands of the Pope ought not to be obeyed, if, namely, he enormously and most scandalously abuses his power, unto destruction and not unto edification, for which, as the Apostle says, power has been conferred on him. For instance, if the Pope wished to appropriate the treasures of the Church or to usurp her inheritance, or to reduce to abject slavery the clergy and their goods, despoiling them of their rights without cause, who would say that this should be tolerated? Who would not admit that the Pope might be asked, Why do you do this? Who would not agree that he should be resisted to his face?

"'Contempt of the Keys is likewise not always found with those who do not obey sentences of excommunication promulgated by the Pope or his agents, nor with those who seek the help of the secular arm in defence against such sentences; for the natural law declares that we can repel force by force, and it is evident that such excommunications are not right and law, but force and violence, against which it is just for one to defend himself.[2]

[1] Gerson's view on this point, that a Council is superior to the Pope, is no longer tenable among Catholics; nor was it in his day, the sad period of the Great Schism of the West, a generally admitted opinion.

[2] Gerson's words must be read in the gloomy light of the fifteenth century, when, among other grave abuses, that of the Church's spiritual weapons was also of too frequent occurrence, — an evil which drew from the Fathers of Trent, who witnessed the calamities born of that unhappy period, the prudent admo-

"'Contempt of the Keys, and consequently excommunication or irregularity, is not incurred when in the aforesaid cases any canonist or theologian declares on his conscience that such sentences are not to be feared or observed; and this especially holds if due caution has been taken to instruct the people, so that there will be no scandal of the weak among those who suppose that the Pope is as God, having all power in Heaven and on earth. But such stupidity is to be removed by suitable instruction; and then if they are unwilling to abide by it, the scandal they may take is to be accounted as pharisaical and from malice, not the scandal of the weak, from simplicity or ignorance.

"'Contempt of the Keys is rather encouraged than abated, when those who ought to resist the abuse of the Keys are divided, and thus become an impediment, either through stupidity or sluggishness (some favoring abuses, others wishing to remove them), preventing an expression of united opinion, whereby it would be seen that there is no ground for exclusion from the house of God.

"'It is, indeed, of truth that every promising means should be humbly used with the Sovereign Pontiff, when he has been deceived and thus induced to impose an unjust censure, in the hope that he may reconsider and recall it; but if humble perseverance avails nought, then may manly liberty be courageously followed.'

nition with which they charged prelates to observe great restraint and forbearance in fulminating censures.

Writing of the period with which we are dealing, Pastor justly remarks: "The punishments inflicted by the Church had certainly less effect than formerly, partly through the fault of the clergy, who employed them too freely and for trifling causes." (History of the Popes, v. 92. Eng. trans.)

"Behold how well John Gerson speaks to our case. To believe, therefore, that all censures should be observed proceeds from ignorance, which is especially unbecoming and harmful in priests and religious who have undertaken the office of preaching and instructing the people. But such ignorance has waxed so strong in our day that many rashly and blindly affirm that all who come to our convent, or speak with us, are, by the very fact, excommunicated. This, at least, is very doubtful, because in the words of the Brief[1] this is not expressly stated; the Pope only so admonishes them under a like penalty of excommunication. But canonists commonly hold that when such an admonition is given, unless it is added, 'you will incur excommunication' by the very fact of disregarding, one so acting is not excommunicated, but may be excommunicated. And this is according to general practice. But to affirm as certain what is doubtful in this case proceeds either from malice and presumption or from ignorance, particularly because penal things are to be restricted, nor may any one in doubt be condemned by law.

"In this affair the ignorance and blindness of these men are further manifested when they preach that they who speak to me or go to our convent must be avoided, not knowing that Pope Martin the Fifth, in the Council of Constance (and it was renewed in that of Basle), decreed that the faithful are by no means obliged to avoid excommunicated persons, whether in matters divine or otherwise, unless such persons have been expressly named and denounced, excepting the case of those who have notoriously assaulted an ecclesiastic.

[1] Of May 13, 1497.

"Hence, even if we admitted that the excommunication was valid, it would not be necessary to avoid those to whom I have referred. But these priests and religious, who spend the whole day in idleness, seldom or never devote themselves to study or prayer, and therefore they are grossly ignorant, to say nothing worse. However, do you pray for the Church, that God may at length deign to illumine her as in the beginning. Farewell in Christ." [1]

By recalling the principles of canon law and theology bearing on our inquiry, and which we have already given; and by considering in their light the story of Savonarola's conduct as narrated in the first part of our essay, the reader can judge whether he gave scandal. That his pharisaical enemies took scandal after their kind concerns us not, for it concerned him not. The representative men of the State, after grave deliberation, and the virtuous citizens, were not only fully prepared for his preaching, at the end of the Friar's long seclusion, but they were also eager to listen to him.[2]

[1] Quetif (pp. 191 *seq.*) publishes the Latin text of this letter. The date of its writing is not known, but it was probably late in June or early in July, shortly after the Brief of May 13, 1497, had been received in Florence.

[2] Even before the faithful spoke, telling of their spiritual hunger, the nuns of the Monastery of St. Vincent, Florence, had begged him to give them conferences; but he declined, judging that they were under no special need, nor was the time ripe when there would be no scandal of the weak. (Epistolæ Spirituales et Asceticæ, xii., p. 229 *seq.*) After he had resumed his preaching the nuns of the monastery known as the Fuligno,

The suppression of all sermons, coupled with the renewed activity of the wicked, had thrown Florence back to the deplorable conditions from which Savonarola's apostolate had rescued the people. Under the impulse of charity, that supreme virtue, which the Apostle has described as the greatest,[1] Savonarola, who was ready to lay down his life for souls, was moved to speak. Under this universal law and after mature counsel with holy and learned men, he broke the silence he had so long maintained on account of the weak,[2] and beholding the spiritual interests of the flock endangered, realizing that it was not a question as to the timeliness or expediency of preaching, but that the doctrine which he had taught was stigmatized, that the truth of Jesus Christ was branded, as pernicious, that further silence would be a

Florence, who were under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop and the direction of the Canons of San Lorenzo's, attended Savonarola's sermons, coming two at a time to each discourse. (Lottini, p. 23.) Both of these Communities were noted for their piety and fervor. The testimony of their esteem is not without marked value when it is asked if Savonarola neglected any precaution against scandal.

[1] 1 Corinthians xiii. 13; St. Thomas, 1^{a} $2^{æ}$, q. 66, art. 6; and 2^{a} $2^{æ}$ q. 23, art. 6.

[2] In the second sermon on Exodus, he puts to himself the objection: "O Friar, you have observed the excommunication. You have remained shut up in your convent, and you have celebrated Mass in private without coming before the public." And he answered: "I have never observed it on my own account, and I have said Mass every day, but I have made use of some precautions, outwardly and through regard for the weak."

confession of the justice of the slanders published against him, he resolved to mount the pulpit. He followed the teaching of St. Thomas,[1] of St. Gregory, of Catholic theology.

Had it been merely a question of the advisability of *then* preaching, he should have been silent;[2] it was, however, a case of the truth of his doctrine, of public morality, of the welfare of souls, of supreme charity.[3] Having given ample instruction, in which learned and eminent men of the time joined, having removed lingering doubts, and set forth the injustice and invalidity of the excommunication, he was free to disregard the hypocrites and pharisees who persecuted him, and sought the destruction of the reform which he had inaugurated.

Not only did he not give scandal in this, but he sought to avert the scandal given by others.[4] Following the teaching of the Angelic Doctor he would administer paternal correction, even to those

[1] In 4 Sent. D. xxxviii., q. ii., a. 4.

[2] St. Matthew vii. 6.

[3] His sermons for Septuagesima and Sexagesima, 1498, make clear this point.

[4] What held after the Friar's death was true during the sad days of the excommunication: "It was a common saying that since the days of Mahomet no such scandal had ever disgraced Christianity as the wickedness then rife amongst the Florentines. Vice revelled in all its forms as if virtue had been prohibited by law, and no crime was held so abominable, so shameful or reprehensible as that of having believed in the Friar, or advocated a reform of the Court of Rome. Vices of the most disgusting nature, then but too common in Florence, now revived in all the filth of their unnatural character, and again poisoned society." Napier, bk. ii., chap. 7, vol. iii., pp. 617, 618.

above him.[1] Like St. Bernard he would not shrink, because of the age, power, or dignity of any man, from reproaching him, for the avoidance of scandal. The greater the name and dignity, he argued with the Saint, the greater the scandal. Therefore he would reprove his elder, he would try to teach a master, he would give counsel to the wise.[2]

The extraordinary character of Savonarola's mission had rendered his position singular. The conditions that prevail in the usual work of a preacher did not hold as to his influence, nor as to the necessity of his labors. Though the Florentines had many instructors, he had been their spiritual foster father;[3] and outraged virtue and derided piety, witnessing the wreck of his wonderful work, grieved, with the Friar himself, over the destruction of the building he had with so much care erected, over the desolation of the vineyard he had cultivated in labor and tears; and they cried out to the silenced leader, and begged him to speak once more, to fight against religion's enemies, who had abused religion's power, "practical infidels, corrupt themselves and corrupting others, into whose hands, as many felt, the authority of the Church had fallen."[4] It was not against the Pope that he stood forth, nor

[1] 2^a $2^{æ}$, q. 33, art. 2, 3, 4, and Quæstiones Disputatæ, de Virtutibus, q. vi., art. 1, ad. 18.

[2] Epistola cc., tom. i., p. 85.

[3] 1 Corinthians iv. 15.

[4] Lottini, p. 21.

against the authority of the Holy See. He contended that he was following what would have been the Pope's directions, had Alexander not been so shamefully deceived.

On this point, let us hear the Friar himself. In the last sermon he preached, on March 18, 1498, he objects in the name of the people: "O Friar, we must not oppose the ecclesiastical power!" "I say that when it destroys the Church, it is not ecclesiastical power, but it is an infernal power, and is given by Satan. I say to you that when it fosters harlots, profligates, and robbers, and persecutes the good and destroys good-living Christians, then it is an infernal and diabolical power, and must be firmly resisted and corrected, as St. Peter and St. Paul did. But because you say, 'O Friar, you are weakening ecclesiastical power,' I answer that this is not true. I also wish not to be above the ecclesiastical authority, and thus I submit myself, and all that I have ever said, to the correction of the Roman Church and the ecclesiastical power. And I do not weaken it; in fact, I even increase it and wish to remain subject to it, but not under infernal power, and not under diabolical power. I defend the ecclesiastical power and the Roman Church and the doctrine of Jesus Christ."

The reader is here asked to refer to the teaching of theology as embodied in the first part of the chapter. In the light of these sound principles,

follow the Friar, step by step, through the perils that beset religion because of the attack on his ministry, and the calumnies against his preaching; consider the grave interests that were endangered; observe the care and prudence with which he met the difficult problem, the solid foundation on which he rested, of doctrine, learning, and counsel, in the conclusion on which he resolved; and note well that only when the preparation of the people had met their own earnest longing, did the Friar break the silence which had cost Florence so dearly. We are satisfied that the serious judgment of the reader will not only acquit Savonarola of the charge of having given scandal, but it will eulogize the piety, humility, and courage of the man who thus "stood forth for manly liberty in Christ," for the truth of his wonderful preaching, and for the maintenance of his marvellous reform.

V.

CONCLUSION.

A CAREFUL study of the intricate question to which we have endeavored to give a satisfactory answer convinces the writer that Savonarola's career, during the trying period of the ban, was one of religious prudence, and noble consistency. His own conscience had acquitted him of guilt or offence that might entail a censure. The people soon learned that the excommunication was invalid, and though his enemies strove to influence public opinion, they carried little weight beyond their own circles.

The Holy See, when the sad end came, confirmed the attitude of the determined Friar, who had never asked for absolution, who had scorned the offer of freedom from censure, a freedom depending on a simoniacal bribe; for Alexander, though he gave Savonarola permission to celebrate Mass on the day of his execution, granted no absolution from the bond of excommunication, and allowed the condemned man, sacramentally absolved, and enriched with a plenary indulgence, to expire under the ban![1]

[1] Consult chapter "The Question of Censures."

This fact proves that Alexander did not regard the Friar as excommunicated. Nor can it be said that his confessor had been authorized to absolve Savonarola from the censure, for what is freely asserted is as freely denied, and as the Friar was not *in articulo mortis* (in the ordinary sense of the word) the ordinary power of a confessor would not suffice. Moreover, the Apostolic judges were present, and on them would have devolved the exercise of the delegated faculty had any such faculty been granted. And even assuming that such a faculty had been granted, it is certain that there was no retraction by Savonarola of errors charged, there was no expression of repentance for scandal that would have been given by offences for which he had been declared excommunicate. A private apology and regret would not have availed. From a man validly and notoriously excommunicated an open reparation was due, if not by a personal, verbal declaration before his death, at least, by an authentic writing for subsequent publication; and from this obligation there could be no release by the Apostolic commissaries. Had these men not acted in conformity with the Pope's views and according to his instructions, is it likely that the omission of absolution and the neglect of reparation would have passed without rebuke from Alexander? There was no rebuke from him, nor complaint from any one authorized to speak.

Savonarola made no apology. With serene con-

sistency he went unfalteringly to that death for which he had long prepared, and which he willingly endured for principles of which his life had been a beautiful exemplification. He went with the ban still upon him, such as it was; the ban from which he had solemnly announced that he would never seek absolution,[1] because he knew that he had done no wrong meriting such a penalty, and because he believed that the censure was unjust and invalid, without binding force before God or man.[2]

[1] Sermon for Septuagesima, 1498.

[2] Savonarola's various appeals for the lifting of the ban were not for absolution. He strove to have a serious impediment to his work removed, and through respect for the Holy See, and fearing lest scandal might come to the "little ones," he labored, till hope was cast down, to secure the recall of the Brief. In the second sermon on Exodus he put the objection to himself: "O Friar, you have written and asked for absolution." He answered: "For myself I have not done this, though they asked me to write and admit that I had erred, but in no manner would I do so. In other things I have erred, for I am a sinner, but not in this, because I have preached the doctrine of Jesus Christ. I have indeed written for fear of scandal, and I have tried to have the excommunication removed, for love of the 'little ones.'" And in his third sermon on Exodus he declared: "Believe me, I am not foolish, not knowing how I am placed. If I desired human expedients I would know how to free myself. I recognize their cunning and craft. If I were satisfied to trample on conscience I also could be as cunning; but knowing that the Lord is with me, I fear nothing." See also Quetif, p. 252. In this spirit he pleaded with the Pope, but as has been already noted, it is probable that some of his letters were kept from Alexander by determined enemies who dreaded the pontifical favor in behalf of their victim. It may also be stated that the Florentine authorities held the same view as that of the Friar, and in the same spirit labored to have the

By those who condemn Savonarola as really excommunicated, much stress has been laid on the fact that he was a member of a Religious Order, and the question of the obedience which he thereby owed to his superiors is discussed in a manner altogether unfavorable to him. With that question we have dealt in an Appendix. Here we merely desire to emphasize the fact that the attitude of the Friar, at the close of his life, touching the excommunication, finds singular approval from his own Order, which has practically taken the same stand as that which Pope Alexander took, that Savonarola was not excommunicated; and as the latter judged that he needed not absolution, so his Order has always regarded his acts of jurisdiction as valid, a thing not sufferable had he been really excommunicated, for then he would have been deprived of all jurisdiction.[1] Neither the Master General of the Order nor the Cardinal Protector nor the Commissioner especially appointed to consider his case, declared him deposed from his post of Prior of St. Mark's; and during the sad period following the publication of the Brief of Excommunication, up to the time of his arrest, he discharged the duties of his office, in all its details, including, as the chronicle of his convent informs us, the im-

Brief of May 13, 1497 recalled; in this effort they were advised by eminent theologians and canonists. See Quetif, pp. 52 *seq.*, and Miscellanea of Baluzius, tom. i., 594.

[1] Schmalzgrueber, t. 39, n. 164, tom. xi., 445; Reiffenstuel, t. 39, n. 68, tom. v., 391.

portant work of reception to the habit and to profession of various candidates and novices.

Of all the principles which we have noted, Savonarola was well aware. Witnessing as he did the tragedy that was enacted, of which he was the hero and the victim, seeing with a clearness that to us is impossible, with the mists of four hundred years obscuring our view, he was certain that no law obliged him publicly to acknowledge himself as excommunicate, when the conviction had become general that the censure was invalid, not only because of substantial defects in juridical order, and because the Brief was extorted from the Pope through falsehood and slander, and published against his will, but chiefly because the alleged fault, interdicted under the penalty of excommunication, did not exist, because the Friar had not done that for which he was declared anathema.

Having exhausted all means of patient submission, of silent humiliation, of respectful petition, and finding the way to the Sovereign Pontiff closed against him by wicked men who had shamefully abused the papal confidence, Savonarola followed the counsel of Gerson, and stood for his manly liberty, for the doctrine of his Divine Master, and, in charity that was ready unto death, for the welfare of souls.

Here it may be pertinent to observe that no one has ever supposed that the Communities of St. Mark's and St. Dominic's, Fiesole, were excom-

municated, individually or collectively. Yet in that troubled time, so far as history has unfolded the record of the words and deeds of the friars of these two houses, we are safe in affirming that if Savonarola was in conscience excommunicated, so also were they, for their stand was in agreement with his, nor could the penalty of their actions have fallen on their Prior, but must have been borne by themselves. No one at the time entertained any erroneous notions on this point. Despite the fact that the terms of the Brief of union, November 7, 1496, were general, that an excommunication was launched against any and every one, of whatsoever dignity, who would antagonize the scheme, it was understood that Savonarola was the object of attack. All knew the significance of the stigma put upon the Prior, who had clearly stated it: "These adversaries seek one man out of hatred for the Truth."[1] They desired to restore a reign under which license would have sway. To accomplish their object, it was necessary for the libertines and infidels to destroy Savonarola's influence over the people, and this could be effected only by destroying himself. Against libertine and infidel he fought bravely. That he failed, and in failing lost his life, is in the record of every martyr. Savonarola was put to death in hatred of virtue, under cover of a political necessity. It was like to an older story, that of the Divine Master Himself.

[1] Letter of June 19, 1497.

Savonarola was one of those victims that from time to time justice demands of humanity.[1] He was persecuted for justice's sake, he was made anathema for his brethren ;[2] and the iron entered his soul in a manner supremely agonizing — through attempted ejection from the household of the Faith, because of his unbending devotion to the highest ideals of the doctrines of Jesus Christ, Who had predicted this form of trial as the crowning sorrow of His disciples: "They will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God."[3]

"If these explanations, which seem to me reasonable, be admitted, it will be understood why persons of great worth cherished such deep esteem and loving veneration for Father Jerome, and even went so far as to invoke him as a martyr and a saint. If this solution be rejected, I shall always see an inextricably contradictory enigma in this love and veneration, since certain cavils have been set forth to account for it, belittling the saints, lessening respect for them, even discrediting the very authority of the Church which has placed them on her altar, and suggesting doubts regarding Divine Providence itself, as having permitted that some

[1] Lottini, p. 23.

[2] Romans ix. 3.

[3] St. John xvi. 2. See also the same Gospel, ix. 22, 34, and xii. 42.

leading heroes of Christianity, in whom sanctity shone forth from the cradle to the grave, should show, not only by occasional acts, but throughout the course of their lives, veneration and devotion to a man who had been disobedient, excommunicated, and condemned, for guilt true and real, which he would not acknowledge even in the presence of death." [1]

St. Catherine of Ricci, St. Philip Neri, and others of the crowned soldiers of Christ, were familiar with all the facts; they lived among the living memories of the illustrious Prior; they shared the traditions that were sacredly handed down, in the Florence and Rome of their day, even by some who had known the Friar or his immediate disciples. To these Saints we cannot deny holiness eminent and solemnly proclaimed by the Church, nor may their intelligence or judgment be questioned. Familiar as they were with the facts, a full knowledge of which cannot be ours, prudence, at least, requires that we hold their devotion to Savonarola in respect. Otherwise the unpleasant conclusion will be forced upon us, of facing the inexplicable problem which Father Lottini presents, an irreverence from which our Catholic instincts shrink.[2]

Hearing, therefore, the solemn words of Savona-

[1] Lottini, p. 23.

[2] In a subsequent work I intend to discuss this subject in detail.

rola that rise as a last testament from gallows-tree and fire, — "I have never been disobedient to the Roman Church, nor to the Pope, nor to any of my superiors up to this present hour; and this I say, not to praise myself, but for truth's sake, and if I do not speak the truth, I am satisfied that it will stand against me at the tribunal of Jesus Christ," [1] — we conclude, with Father Lottini, that "this leaves no middle course. Either the innocence of the Friar must be recognized, or to so many other charges against him must be added those of liar and perjurer." [2]

[1] Letter of June 19, 1497; see page 83.
[2] Page 15.

APPENDIX I.

THE QUESTION OF OBEDIENCE.

FOR a better understanding of our inquiry, it is deemed advisable to consider briefly the obligations and limits of obedience, especially for an ecclesiastic or religious. Faith does not repudiate reason, nor does religion abrogate justice. Rather is religion fidelity to reason and justice. Our service of God must be reasonable.[1] Thus the clerical state or that of a religious Order does not impose an arbitrary burden on the man vowed to its service. The "blind obedience" of which the Saints speak in terms of ardent praise does not mean an actual submission to any and every possible command; it signifies, rather, that disposition of heart and mind whereby the subject holds himself in constant readiness to fulfil all that obedience will lawfully impose on him, without question as to the superior's motives or as to the opportuneness of his order.

After quoting the Apostolic words, "it behooveth us to obey God rather than man,"[2] St. Thomas explicitly teaches that we are not obliged to obey superiors in all things, as when they command what is wrong, or beyond their right or jurisdiction. He says that re-

[1] Romans xii. 1.

[2] Acts of the Apostles v. 9.

ligious profess obedience so that they may lead a regular life according to a rule by which they are subject to superiors; and obedience following this is sufficient for salvation. If in other things they wish to obey, provided it is not against their rule or contrary to God's law, for this would be sinful, such obedience belongs to the domain of perfection. Hence the Angelic Doctor concludes that obedience may be distinguished as threefold: (*a*) that which is sufficient for salvation, (*b*) that which is perfect, in all things lawful, and (*c*) that which is indiscreet, even in things unlawful.[1] Hence the accepted phrase as to the strict obligation of things *according* to the rule, but not of those *against*, *above*, or beyond the scope of the rule.

To the teaching of the Angelic Doctor on the rights of conscience, we shall also briefly refer. Conscience is the divine law of the intellect, first and supreme, and as interior, antecedent, spiritual, and eternal, it is in itself superior to the exterior, subsequent, corporal bond of obedience to a prelate, which is temporary, and which will not enter into eternity. Conscience is as the light of God's countenance signed upon us,[2] and, when certain, obliges us simply and absolutely, as against a superior's command in contradiction to it.[3]

It is also one thing to judge a superior's commands, and another to judge ourselves as to their fulfilment. In this latter case the tribunal of conscience is supreme.[4] And this principle holds with special force when re-

[1] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 104, art. 5.

[2] Psalm iv. 7.

[3] Quæstiones Disputatæ: de Veritate, q. 17, quinque articuli de conscientia, tom. ii., 89–92.

[4] St. Thomas, loc. cit., art. 5, concl. ad 4. See also $1^a\ 2^{ae}$, q. 71, art. 6, ad 4; In 2 Sent. D. 24, q. 2, a. 4, and D. 39, q. 3, a. 3.

sistance brings with it no convenience or selfish benefit, but rather leads to humiliation and death.

To this teaching of St. Thomas we add a few selections from St. Bernard and from eminent canonists and theologians treating *ex professo* of obedience. The Mellifluous Doctor, as the great Founder of the Cistercians is called, discusses the question of obedience in various parts of his writings, and we quote from one and another of these the following: "The command or prohibition of a prelate may not exceed the limits of the profession made by the subject, so that a religious may not be forbidden the fulfilment of what he has vowed to perform, nor may obligations exceeding the weight of this burden be put upon him. Thus the superior can neither increase one's vow against his will, nor diminish it without *certain* necessity."[1] In another place the holy abbot declares that we *must* resist aught enjoined that is against the Divine law, crying out with the Apostle, that it is better to obey God than man.[2] From a long letter addressed to a monk named Adam who went on a pilgrimage, contrary to his rule, but with the Pope's license, several extracts will be pertinent:[3] "It is very perverse to claim to be obedient when one knows that the Divine Superior (God above man) dissolves such obligations," as are permitted or imposed by an earthly superior, against our pledged rule. Speaking with all reverence of the Sovereign Pontiff on whose permission this monk had based his justification for what he called an act of obedience, St. Bernard indignantly reminds Adam of the scandal of such obedience, and of

[1] De Præcepto et Dispensatione, c. v., p. 75, tom. iv.
[2] Sermones de Diversis, xli., p. 231, tom. ii.
[3] Epistola 7, pp. 11–14, tom. 1.

the rights of the great High Priest, who shed His Blood for our ransom. "Happy disobedience," cries out the holy doctor, "which wounds neither charity nor unity, which is to be preferred to that obedience that leads to scandal!" And he adds that if he had to choose, under such conditions, he would be disobedient.

"Conscience," he writes elsewhere, "is man's inseparable companion, bearing with him the deposit committed to his keeping;[1] it is a book superior to all other books."[2]

To these vigorous words of a Saint eminent as the uncompromising vindicator of the rights of authority, we add the following: Against conscience, even the Pope is not to be obeyed.[3] But where conscience is not certain, if the Pope commands an ecclesiastic in spiritual matters, to do what seems unjust, he must be obeyed, unless the precept would involve sin, or savor of heresy; or unless it was very strongly presumed that the peace of the Church would be disturbed, or occasion would be given from which future evils might spring, to the harm of religion.[4] Even should a

[1] De Moribus et Officio Epis. et Prælat., cap. vi., tom. iv., p. 29.

[2] De Interiori Domo, cap. xv., tom. v., p. 152.

[3] Panormitanus, c. 44, Inquisitioni, tom. vii., 248.

[4] Panormitanus, loc. cit.; Innocentius IV., l. v., t. 39, cap. Inquisitioni, p. cxlvi (primo); Sandæus, c. 44, ii., 1220; Prieras, Obedientia, q. v., ii., 250, who adds that obedience is not to be yielded to such commands as are excepted in the text, even though imposed under threat of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, to be incurred by the very fact of refusal. In other respects the language of Pope Innocent the Fourth, Sandæus, and Prieras is almost identical. In sentiment all are as a unit. Gerson (Consideratio 6, Circa Materiam Excommunicationum et Irregularitatum) stood for the same principle. It is the general teaching of theology.

superior command what is just, if the subject, with a certain conscience, believes that the precept is unjust, and cannot bring himself to another mind, he should follow his interior light, despite its erroneousness.[1] Of course, such erroneousness must be inculpable. However, as Panormitanus adds, the superior has the right to inflict punishment for such resistance, because he is not obliged to see things with the subject's eyes. In doubt as to the justice or lawfulness of a precept, the subject should obey, because the right to command rests with the superior; nor can he be denied this, on a mere doubt. "But," writes St. Alphonsus, "the doctors generally limit this principle, and teach that a subject is not bound to obey when he would thereby expose himself or others to the danger of grave loss in reputation, honor, possessions, or life."[2]

Passerini, who is an eminent authority of modern times, proposes a question: "Is a subject bound to obey a prelate commanding him to do a prohibited work, in which the prelate can dispense?" After giving different solutions in which an affirmative answer would hold, he concludes: "If the dispensation is neither useful nor necessary *for a greater good*, the prelate, being bound to remove impediments to such good, would rather put these in its way by unreasonably dispensing, and therefore the subject would be justified in refusing."[3]

[1] Panormitanus, c. v., Ad Aures, tom. ii., 38, and doctors generally.

[2] L. v., c. i., dub. 4, n. 47, 1, 803, where he cites Lessius, Sanchez, Castro-Palao, Soto, Bannez, the Salmanticenses, and other eminent doctors. See also Passerini, q. 186, art. 8, n. 329, tom. i., 153.

[3] Passerini, q. 185, a. 2, n. 61, tom. i., 134. Compare also St. Alphonsus, l. iv., c. i., dub. 4, n. 40, i., 799.

As our discussion is not on the extreme perfection of obedience in theory, but on the principles that are to be applied in a grave practical difficulty, we dismiss this portion of the subject with a summary, in the words of Cardinal Newman: "Conscience is a messenger from Him Who both in nature and in grace speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by His representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas; and even though the eternal priesthood throughout the Church could cease to be, in it the sacerdotal principle would remain, and would have a sway." [1]

The reader will thus understand the imperative power and binding force of this law of nature, from which even God will not dispense,[2] against which no one can act without incurring the risk of eternal death,[3] and according to which one must regulate all his thoughts, words and actions, since "all that is not of faith (or conscience) is sin." [4]

The reader is also asked to make careful application of these principles to Savonarola's case. Our argument and conclusion, insomuch as obedience is in question, are based on these.

[1] A letter addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, p. 57 (London, 1875).

[2] Salmanticenses, Tr. xx., cap. iv., punct. 3, n. 11–18, tom. v., pp. 19–21.

[3] The Fourth Council of Lateran, quoted by Cardinal Newman, loc. cit.

[4] Romans xiv. 23. So St. Thomas interprets and explains the Apostle's word. See Quæstiones Disputatæ, de Veritate, q. xvii., art. 3.

APPENDIX II.

SOME ORIGINAL LETTERS.

The two following letters were addressed by the Signory to the Cardinal Protector of the Dominican Order in behalf of Savonarola that he might be permitted to resume his preaching. See Chapter I., p. 49.

Reverendissime in Christo Pater et Domine, — Illa tandem multo esse gratiora beneficia videntur quae ultro conferuntur, neque expectant ut emantur precibus ; ut modo evenit: quod ex litteris quas ad fratrem Hieronymum Ferrariensem Vestra reverendissima Paternitas scripsit plane percepimus. Dum enim illi merito favet R. D. V. et iure defendit, nobis favet atque affert beneficium ; per quem, Deo clementissimo indulgente, atque eas sua ineffabili misericordia subministrante vires, ex multis magnisque periculis evasimus. Hunc certe virum suum ad nos praemisit Deus (cum, quo nos ducerent nostra errata, multo ante praevideret), ne funditis periremus : qui saepe praedixit nobis quae ventura super nos essent, neque a vero quicquam aberravit ; iuvit consilio, bonitate ac religione ; erexit doctrina ac praedicatione continua in timore Dei. Et tamen ausi sunt malivoli quidam atque invidi tantae virtuti detrahere et ingerere crimina, et adducere eum pro viribus in Pontificis Maximi indignationem. Nos melius qui mores sint huius viri novimus, quae pietas, quae religio, quae sanctitas, quibuscum vixit, apud

quos tot tantaque bona opera exercuit exercetque et plane divina ; quibus adhibenda fides videtur magis quam fugitivis quibusdam, ut ita dixerimus, qui nec quae recte fiunt cognoscunt, et ab Dei timore aberrant. Agimus ergo immortales gratias R. P. V., qui iustissimum eius patrocinium susceperit apud Pontificis Maximi Sanctitatem ; et multum etiam atque etiam rogamus, ut in eo incoepto perseveret R. D. V., quae nihil quod magis secundum Deum sit facere potest. Nos certe, nihil est quod aeque cupiamus quam audire eum ut solemus praedicantem, et divina nobis praecepta aperientem. Rogamus ergo P. V. ut in dando nobis, beneficio perseveret V. R. D., detque operam apud Summum Pontificem, et quam citius fieri potest, ut ante adventum Domini liceat nobis, per vestram operam et pontificiam benignitatem, redire ad eius audiendas frequentandasque praedicationes : nihil omnibus ex rebus magis expetimus, nihil ex quo magis nos sibi obnoxios V. R. P. reddere possit. Multa sunt vestra in nos et innumerabilia maxima beneficia ; sed huic certe comparari nullum potest. Commendamus R. P. V. urbem et populum nostrum. Ex Palatio nostro, die 13 novembris 1495.

Reverendissimo in Christo Patri, Cardinali Neapolitano, — Quantum nos, universusque populus Florentinus fratrem Hieronymum Ferrariensem, praedicantem et divina nobis aperientem praecepta, ante adventum Domini, audire cupiamus, aliis nostris litteris ad reverendissimam Dominationem Vestram praescripsimus. Cui desiderio nostro etsi certo scimus, Eam totis viribus, ut satisfiat, operam ad Summum Pontifi-

cem daturam; brevitas tamen temporis dubitare nos facit, ne ante ipsius adventus incipiat dies decurrere quam Pontificis litterae ad hoc impetrentur. Itaque reverendissimam Dominationem Vestram plurimum etiam atque etiam rogamus oramusque, ut vivae vocis oraculo id, interim, a Summo Pontifice ut concedatur impetrare curet. Nihil profecto est quod hoc tempore magis desideretur a nobis; nihil ex quo magis R. D. V. nos sibi reddat obnoxios. Cumulabit certe hoc innumerabilia ac maxima beneficia P. V. erga nos, quae hoc uno immortalia utique reddentur. Ex Palatio nostro, die 17 novembris 1495.

The three following letters bear testimony to Savonarola's great merits as a preacher, to his noble efforts for virtue, and to the ingratitude and calumny of those who had accused him. The Ten also deny that Savonarola had attacked any one by name. See Chapter I., pp. 62, 66.

The Ten to Becchi.[1]

Domino Ricciardo de Becchis, die prima aprilis 1497.

Li dì Sancti et poi le feste sono suti causa che habbiamo qualche dì differito lo scrivervi. Farenlo al presente, rispondendo a II vostre de' XXIIII et all'ultima de' XXVII *ec.* Li amorevoli ricordi di quello amico di auctorità, che vi commisse ci confortassi ad essere uniti ec., ci sono stati gratissimi, perchè questo è il nostro principale instituto e desiderio: benchè qui nella terra, intra tucti li cittadini universalmente, non si intenda alchuna discordia nè disunione, perchè tucti tendiamo ad uno medesimo fine, di conservare la nostra libertà

[1] From Gherardi, pp. 157, 158.

et il presente governo della città ; et a questo ognuno promptamente concorre. Et se di costà fussi riferito o scritto altrimenti, se si riguarderà bene la qualità delli auctori, si cognoscerà quanto debole fondamento sia quello di Pietro de' Medici, sforzandosi farsi credito con andare ampliando alchuni abbaiamenti di persone disperati et passionati sanza conditione o credito alchuno. Ma noi ci rendiamo certissimi, essere tale la gravità et prudentia di quelli che lui si ingegna ridurre a' propositi suoi, che non si lascieranno imbarchare facilmente sanza bischotto. Così alla parte del lasciarci noi governare al Frate, quando di costà s'intenda il vero, non bisogna fare altra risposta ; perchè facendo il Frate egregiamente lo officio di buono et amorevole predicatore, di detestare i vitii et ridurre il popolo ad vivere christianamente, come ha continuamente facto et con grande fructo et utile universalmente di tutta la città, sanza impacciarsi di alchuno particulare circa il governo nostro ; non dobbiamo nè possiamo se non essere maximamente obligati alle sua proficue et sancte opere : et tucto quello che fussi referito o scripto in contrario è alieno dalla verità et fondato da passione di alchuni a' quali dispiace il ben vivere. Et così circa l' una parte et l' altra iustificherete con quello amico, ringratiandolo nondimeno dello amore dimostra portare alla città nostra.

The Ten to Bracci.[1]

Ser Alexandro Braccio, die vi maii 1497.

. . . Havendo, ad questi dì passati, li nostri excelsi Signori considerato che la èra comincia pure ad riscal-

[1] From Gherardi, pp. 159, 160.

dare, et che qui è grande concorso di poveri huomini del contado che venghono per il pane, iudicorono essere bene ad proposito obviare che numero di gente non si coadunassino insieme in luoghi strecti, per obviare ogni sospecto di morbo. Et per questo generalmente sospesono, dal dì dell' Ascensione innanzi, il predicare in tanti luoghi. Di che seguì che, dovendo giovedì mactina predicare fra Girolamo, per alchuni giovani schaprestati, che mal volentieri odono le reprehensione de' vitii loro, fu per diversi modi tentato impedirli il predicare: il che dispiacque a molti che desiderano bene vivere, et funne qualche poco di romore : a che fu per la Signoria subito provisto. Di che ci è parso darvi notitia, ad fine che, se etiam di questo si parlassi di costà altrimenti, possiate iustificare la verità. Et alla Santità di Nostro Signore farete intendere, che fra Girolamo, per le cagioni sopradecte, soprasederà in questi caldi il predicare ; ancor che nel predicare suo circa la particularità della Sua Santità si sia sempre portato prudentemente et gravemente; et chi li ha exposto costà altrimenti, lo ha facto mosso più dalla passione che dalla propria verità *ec.* Circa la querela factaci dal Papa, secondo ne significate per lettere ad parte, del modo del predicare di fra Girolamo, sanza quella reverentia si conviene verso la Sua Santità, benchè di sopra incidentemente vi se ne dica qualche cosa, pure, per maggiore expressione dell' animo et buona mente nostra, potete liberamente affermare alla Sua Beatitudine, che le relationi li sono facte non sono vere ; perchè essendo la prefata Signoria prudentissima, non incorrerebbe in tale errore, nè etiam noi lo sopporteremo. Lui fa modestamente lo officio di buon predi-

catore, sanza offendere nominatamente alchuno ; et nondimeno di nuovo li sarà ricordato quando ricominciassi ad predicare.

The Ten to Bracci.[1]

Ser Alexandro Braccio, die xx maii 1497.

Per due vostre lettere da parte, una de' 15 l' altra de' 17, intendiamo quello che costì havessi ritracto dal Cardinale di Napoli, prima, et dipoi dalla Santità del Papa, circa quello si tentava di costà di operare contra a fra Girolamo : della qual cosa habbiamo hauto non mancho admiratione che dispiacere, cognoscendo tutto procedere da male relationi et informationi che sono state fatte di costà, et veramente aliene da ogni verità. Perchè, come altre volte vi s' è scripto, chi investigherà il vero del modo del predicare, quale ha sempre observato fra Girolamo nelle sue prediche, troverrà certamente lui non havere mai particularmente taxato nè ripreso alchuno, ma generalmente ripresi et detestati e vitii, come è concesso a' predicatori et è loro proprio officio ; et non si potrà provare mai che lui expressamente, nè della Santità del Papa nè Cardinali, o di qualunque altri nominatamente, habbi fatto alchuna spetiale mentione. Le predicationi sua nella città nostra hanno fatto grandissimo fructo, sì per essere fondate in singulare dotrina, et theologica et morale, sì etiam per essere reputato di vita continentissima et religiosissima : in modo che veramente si può affermare, la città nostra essere assai obligata alla Sua

[1] From Gherardi, pp. 163, 164.

Paternità, per haverla ridocta a una buona regola et norma di vivere, assai honestamente et con qualche timore di Dio. Et però, se dimonstriamo di havere dispiacere di qualunque cosa fussi tentata contro ad lui, per qualche sinistra informatione, nessuno se ne debba maravigliare, perchè, non volendo essere ingrati, siamo obligati rendere vero testimone della verità, et aiutarlo in quello che per noi si potessi. Et però, pregherete la Santità del Papa et il reverendissimo Cardinale di Napoli, et qualunque altro bisognassi, che, per la sapientia et clementia loro, procedino in questa cosa gravemente, et con quelle considerationi che alla dignità loro et alla verità della cosa si richiede: ad ciò che qualche perverso spirito, con qualche mala suggestione, non fussi causa di alchuno scandolo et disordine: di che di poi la Santità del Papa siamo certi, per la sua bontà, sarebbe malissima contenta, et similmente il reverendissimo Cardinale di Napoli. A' quali, quanto più efficacemente potrete raccomanderete questo caso.

The Florentine Signory to Pope Alexander VI.

A letter from the Signory of Florence, to Pope Alexander VI., in defence of Savonarola, and in commendation of his work. See Chapter I., p. 96.

Sanctissime et Beat^me^ Pater, — Nihil unquam dubitare potuimus de clementissimo animo et beneficentissimo S. V^ae^ in nos. Tot tantisque in rebus pontificiam clementiam semper sumus experti, ut nihil potuerit accidere nostrae Civitati, quod turbare nos

posset, quod idem non sit S. Clementiaeque V. molestum futurum. Qua de re scribimus etiam modo ad S. V^m^, majore cum spe impetrandi quae supplicaturi sumus. Est autem inter ea, quae hoc tempore Reipublicae nostrae, aliter quam nos voluerimus, acciderunt non inter postrema, quod modo evenit, quod Frater Hieronymus Ferrariensis indignationem S. V^ae^, quod censura significatum est, incurrerit. Duae nos causae potissimum movent — altera est quod non parum id nobis et populo ferme omni nostro permolestum fuit, ut puta, qui ecclesiasticas censuras, propter Apos. Sedis reverentiam consuetudine vetustissima nostrae Civitatis, inter primas Italiae gentes semper fuimus abominati; altera causa est quod moleste tulimus ferimusque insectatam esse boni viri quantum nos cognoscimus, virtutem, et dilata fuisse ad S. V^m^ ea nulla honesta de causa, quae merito excitare pontificales in F. Hieronymum censuras, si ea vera extitissent, debuissent.

Nos, S^me^ Pater, multo aliter censemus; bonum nos hunc virum, beneque religiosum peritumque rerum Christianarum existimamus. Diversatus est in urbe nostra, aliquot annos, praedicationibus intentus, plebeque ad meliores mores instruenda, neque notari potuit (modo careat affectibus delatio) quidquam in quo vel exemplo vitae vel excellenti doctrina aberraverit; sed ut novit V. Beatitudo, vix inveniri potest ubi praeclara virtus careat invidia. Sunt et in nostra Urbe tanquam in magno populo, qui etiam virtutem invertant, seu naturae levitate, seu alio quovis morbo, et tunc sibi plus placeant, doctique esse magis viri videantur, cum quid in doctos bonosque viros liberius audent, quibus

magis venia danda, quam graviore aliquo periculo id vindicare erroris.

Supplicamus ergo S. Clementiaeque V^ae^ pro ea qua omnibus in rebus semper fuit in nos vestra paterna et divina charitas, ut totum hoc negotium ad gravitatem sapientiamque V. S^tis^, referatur, tollaturque haec animorum displicentia Civitati, atque ista censurarum pontificalium gravitas ne plus posse videatur parum religiosa quorumdam levitas, quam bona studia bonaeque artes hominum religiosorum.

Nihil est, Sanctissime et Beatissime Pater, quod possit fieri hoc tempore a clementissimo Pontifice Christique Vicario in nos atque urbem nostram gratius, quam si istae pontificiales censurae fuerint benignitate, donoque Sanctitatis V. sublatae ; neque illae solum quae seorsum F. ipsum Hier^mum^ taxaverunt, sed et quaecunque aliae quae ab eandem causam alios quoque complexae fuissent. Nihil majore studio magisque piis animi affectibus supplicare Sanctitati Clementiaeque V. possumus. Et quia rem, ut videtur nobis, piam supplicamus, dubitare vix possumus S. V^m^ benigne esse largiturum, ne quid animabus periculi, hoc praesertim pestilentiae tempore possit contingere. Munus, ut videtur nobis, petimus dignum S^te^ V^a^ et Clementia adquam potissimum pertinet Christianae Salutis cura, ut quantum est in S^te^ V^a^, nulla ovis pereat. Id tandem veri Pastoris Christique Vicarii videtur officium, ad Redemptoris N. J. C. imitationem, qui sese morti spontaneus obtulit, ut nos ejus redempti sanguine viveremus. Neque nos hac in re tantum volumus oratam esse S. V^m^, ut nobis indulgeat hanc gratiam, sed ut coeteris quoque in rebus omnibus, ut semper ab ea factum est. Meminerit V. Sanctitas

hujus devotissimae civitatis et populi Sedis Ap. et S^tis^ Clementiaeque V^ae^ cui nos et rempublicam istam humillime commendamus.

Ex Palatio Nostro die octavo Julii 1497.

Another from Same to Same.

In respectful protest against the censure of excommunication, and in strong appeal for the recall of the Brief of May 13, 1497. This letter also bears eloquent testimony to the merits of the Friar.

Sanctissime ac Beatissime Pater, — Ut primum de literis vestrae Sanctitatis nuncium accepit Hieronymus Savonarola, qui in his "filius iniquitatis" appellatur, ab Ecclesia majori ubi populum religionem et bonos mores docebat, in monasterium suum rediit, tantisperque falsis detrahentium calumniis cedere decrevit, donec defervesceret ira Sanctitatis V., et certiore nuncio intelligeret non esse vera haec in quibus accusatur: "in periculum animarum Christi fidelium perniciosos gravesque errores disseminare et in plurimorum scandalum praedicationes suas afferre."

Nos enim testari possumus hunc optimum in vinea Domini fossorem, eos fructus ex ea colligisse, quos nulli hactenus nostra aetate colligerunt. Et ut repetamus altius, si vera sunt quae dicuntur "annunciate quae futura sunt nobis, et dicemus quod dii estis vos," hunc certe supra hominem existimare nos oportet, qui octo jam annis multa praedixit quae eventura nobis erant. Interim nunquam cessans ad meliorem religionis cultum nos emendare facileque docendo, scribendo, praedicandoque effecit, ut deleto omni malo habitu, si

quis erat in nobis, ad sanctiorem vitam proficeremus, idque continue peragens zelo domus Dei, facile multorum inimicitias in se contraxit "qui magis oderunt lucem quam tenebras," quorum falsis calumniarum suggestionibus permota Sanctitas V. noxium hunc Christianae Religioni credidit, cujus tamen in ea fructus hi sunt: docere omnes justitiam, hortari cives nostros aequali quodam jure et populari uti, insidias omnium in rempublicam nostram detegere, nec pati contra jus Civitatis nostrae jura aliquem sibi occupare; docere parentes optimam filiorum educationem et eruditionem, ut digni Christiano nomine evadant, persuadere mulieribus, deposito omni ornatu corporis, sequi Christum pueros, nihil magis nosse quam gesta Christi et Sanctorum, et omnes indignos Christiano nomine e societate et coetu nostro expellere, pro quibus facile multorum civium et alienorum offensionem subiens, accusatus est "demoliri muros Jerusalem," non tam quia nos pereamus de via justa, amisso religionis duce, quam quia civilium discordiarum hanc causam habeant, quae unica illis relicta est via ad ambitionem suam et nocendum nobis.

Dolemus autem non posse nos mandatis S. V. facile parere, ne rem indignam Civitate nostra videamur fecisse, et tamquam ingrati in hominem de nobis optime meritum arguamur. Accedit hoc, non posse hoc sine populari discordia et multorum periculo tentari, tot tantorumque animos sua integritate sibi conciliavit a qua re scimus V. Sanct^{m} abhorrere, nec passuram unquam nos nostro tam ingenti cum periculo mandatis suis parere. Grave etiam nobis est S. V^{m} a voluntate sua in nos destitisse ob haec, si quidem paucis

diebus antea accepimus ex literis oratoris nostri quam parato animo ea esset ad instaurationem Reipublicae nostrae. Nunc vero, ut aiunt, momento temporis ea nobis mandari audimus, quae sine dedecore et periculo nostro praestare non possumus. Quod reliquum est, B^me^ Pater, oramus S. V^m^ ne derelinquat nos, sed causam nostram eo favore prosequatur quo hactenus prosequuta est, nec velit his mandatis Civitatem nostram miscere et in aliorum utilitatem ruinas nostras augere. Nos in his eam rationem servabimus ut quales in ecclesiam semper fuimus et fidem Catholicam, tales etiam nunc reperiamur, id tamen significantes magis nobis cordi esse Rempublicam nostram quam aliorum commoda, quo animo desideramus esse etiam S. V^m^. Sic enim securius illi et utilius toti Italiae fiat.

Commendamus nos Urbem populumque nostrum clementiae S. V^ae^.

Ex Palatio nostro, die 4^a^ Martii, 1498.[1]

The following letters bear eloquent testimony to the Friar's merits. They are the work of St. Mark's Community and of Florentine citizens. See Chapter I., pages 96, 97.

BEATISSIME PATER, POST PEDUM OSCULA BEATORUM, — Havendo noi inteso, dopo altre nostre lettere scritte a V. Santità, che po' (che) alcuni della nostra città che poco temono Dio, hanno quella sinistramente informata, et irritatola contra il nostro f. Girolamo,

[1] These letters are given by Quetif, pp. 127 *seq.* and 122 *seq.*, and by Marchese: Documenti, pp. 155 and 156, and 165–167. Quetif gives May 4, 1497, as the date of the second letter, but this is erroneous. We follow Marchese in assigning it to March, 1498.

havendo scritto alla Santità V. che la dottrina sua è repugnante alla dottrina Cattolica et al ben commune della città, et che la residenza sua in questa città è la distructione di essa, con altre cose false et inique, ne è parso, per maggior chiarezza della verità et per giustificatione della innocenza sua, di par piena testificatione a quella come la dottrina di esso f. Girolamo è stata la salute di questa città, et spirituale et corporale, secondo che per l'opere manifestate appare, cosi in detta città come ne' Conventi nostri, dove per le sue predicationi et essortationi è introdotto il vero vivere Christiano, et sempre ha essortato né cessa di essortare alla legge evangelica et alla vera pace tutti gli huomini, li quali se seguitassino quello che egli predica, saria beata la nostra città: et di questo ne rendiamo testimonio tutti noi, che siamo piu di dugento cinquanta frati, la piu parte della terra, li quali ogni hora conversiamo con lui. Et essendo par noi di qualche cognitione et esperienza, et havendo abbandonato il mondo per servire a Dio, non creda la Santità V. che volessimo diffendere et sostenere un forastiero se non fossimo certi della vita et bontà sua, vedendosi certamente la mano di Dio esser con lui, et che il suo stare et predicare nella città é la salute di quella et l'augumento della religione Christiana, come appare per molti huomini prudenti et letterati et di stimatione, convertiti per lui alla religione, et che continuamente si convertono et vivono sotto l'ombra sua, crescendo in perfettione di vita et dottrina, in tal modo che in brevi tempo speriamo che habbino a far gran frutto nella Chiesa di Dio. Et, se il testimonio nostro non è accetto, a tanta certezza habbiamo fatto sottoscrivere molti cittadini

nobili et boni della terra; acciò che la Santità V. intenda che ella è stata male informata di queste cose da chi non ha timor di Dio. Et quando ella ne vorrà piú di questi, saremo apparecchiati a darne non solo centinaia ma migliaia. Preghiamo dunque V. S. si degni rivocare le censure fatte contra detto f. Girolamo et favorirlo in quest' opera, perché certo ne avrà merito appresso Dio; et a questa città, massime a quelli che hanno voglia di ben vivere, fara cosà gratissima, essendosi molto contristati di tali scommunica. Et noi pregheremo di continuo per lo stato di Vostra Santità, alla quale humilimente ei raccomandiamo, et baciamo li S^mi^ piedi.

B^nis^ Vestrae devotissimi servuli fratres totius Congregationis T. Marci, Ord. Praed.

Ex Conventu T. Marci, de Florentia, etc.

To the sentiments expressed in this letter, not only did the two hundred and fifty friars of St. Mark's subscribe, but several hundred Florentine nobles and other leading citizens hastened to attach their names, with the following testimony added :

B^me^ PATER, — Noi cittadini infrascripti, a corroboratione della sopradette cose, a Vostra Santità per gli detti religiosi et venerandi Padri esposte et narrate, attestiamo essere la sincera et indubitata verita che dalla dottrina del detto P. f. Girolamo, nella nostra città predicata, non la destrutione ma la vera salute et pace sempre è proceduta. Per la qual cosa, con ogni debita humilità, preghiamo Vostra Santità si degni il detto Padre dalle detto censure liberare, come li soprascritti religiosi et venerandi Padri piamente a quella hanno supplicato. Il che per la sua solita clemenza

facendo, siamo certissimi, non solo la gloria et honore di Dio doverne risultare, ma la salute et spirituale et corporale, con la universale pace et vera unione, di tutta la nostra et vostra città.

I nomi de quali cittadini, che tal cosa attestano et confermano di propria mano ciascuno di loro, in presenza di noi sottoscritti, sono questi, civè:

Then follow the signatures. Villari gives this text in his life of Savonarola, Volume II., Appendix, xlii–xliv, and in his "Scelta di Prediche e Scritti di Fra Girolamo Savonarola," pp. 512–514. The full list of signatories is also there printed.

APPENDIX III.

A LIST OF WORKS TO WHICH SPECIAL REFERENCE IS MADE IN THIS VOLUME.

I. Historical.

1. Archivio Storico Italiano — containing Documents relating to Savonarola, as follows: Appendix 25, Marchese; No. 36, Del Lungo; Nos. 113 and 114, Cosci.

2. Bayonne, Père Emmanuel-Ceslaus (O.P.): Étude Sur Jérôme Savonarole, des Frères-Prêcheurs d'après de Nouveaux Documents (Paris, 1879).

3. Bullarium Ordinis F F. Prædicatorum (Romæ, 1732), 8 volumes.

4. Burlamacchi Fra Pacificus (O.P.): Vita di Girolamo Savonarola. This is contained in Volume I., pp. 527–583, of the "Miscellanea" of Stephen Baluzius, edited by J. D. Mansi (Lucca, 1761), 4 volumes.

5. Cappelli, Antonio: Fra Girolamo Savonarola e Notizie Intorno il Suo Tempo (Modena, 1869).

6. Gherardi, Alessandro: Nuovi Documenti e Studi Intorno a Girolamo Savonarola (Firenze, 1887).

7. Lottini, Padre Giovanni (O.P.): Fu Veramente Scomunicato il Savonarola? (Milano, 1898.)

8. Luotto, Paolo: Il Vero Savonarola e il Savonarola di L. Pastor (Firenze, 1897).

9. Marchese, Padre Vincenzo (O.P.): (*a*) San Marco, Convento dei P. Predicatori in Firenze, illustrato e inciso (Firenze, 1853); (*b*) Scritti Vari (Firenze, 1860), 2 volumes.

10. Napier, Henry E.: Florentine History (London, 1847), 6 volumes.

11. Nardi, Jacopo: Le Storie della Citta di Firenze (Firenze, 1584).

12. Perrens, F. T.: (*a*) Jérôme Savonarole d'après des pièces justificatives, etc. (Paris, 1856); (*b*) Histoire de Florence. 3 vols., Paris, 1888-1890.

13. Pico, della Mirandola, J. F.: Vita R. P. Fr. Hieronymi Savonarolæ (Paris, 1674). This volume contains also the Compendium Revelationum and the Lamentatio Sponsæ Christi — edited by Father James Quetif, O.P. who also compiled the "Additiones," comprising Pico's argument against Savonarola's excommunication, various letters of the Friar, of Alexander VI., of the Signory, etc., — a valuable collection, from which we quote under the heading Quetif.

14. Quarto Centenario della morte di Fra Girolamo Savonarola, — a bi-monthly magazine, issued in Florence from January to the close of December, 1898, and edited by Padre Lodovico Ferretti, O.P., a member of the Congregation of St. Mark. The student of Savonarola's life will find this an interesting and helpful periodical.

15. Villari, Pasquale: La Storia di Girolamo Savonarola e de' suoi tempi (Firenze, 1887), 2 volumes, with appendices containing many documents which are omitted from the English translation of the work published in New York, 1890.

II. Canon Law and Theology.

This list of authorities includes not only some of the great theologians and canonists, the giants whose names are identified with the science of divinity and ecclesiastical law, as leaders by eminence, but others whose more popular manuals may be accessible to readers unable to consult the voluminous works of the masters which are not usually found outside of large or specially selected libraries. Various ages and schools are represented, before and after the Council of Trent.

1. Alphonsus, S. (Founder of the Redemptorists and Doctor of the Church) : Theologia Moralis (Augustæ Taurinorum, 1879), 2 volumes.

2. Antoninus, S. (O.P.) de Excommunicatione, — in Volume XIV. of the "Tractatus Illustrium in utraque tum Pontificii tum Cæsarei Juris Facultate Jurisconsultorum (Venetiis, 1584). This edition may be more easily consulted than the older editions of his "Summa."

3. Bernardus, S., Claravellensis Abbas: Opera Omnia (Lugduni, 1679), 6 volumes.

4. Raymundus, de Pennafort, S. (O.P.): Summa textu Sacrorum Canonum, etc., opera et studio R. P., H. V. Laget, ejusdem ordinis (Parisiis, 1720).

5. Thomas Aquinas, S. (O.P.) : Summa, edition of Cajetan (Romæ, 1570), and Quæstiones Disputatæ (Antverpiæ, 1569).

6. Aertnys, Joseph (C. SS. R.): Theologia Moralis (Tornaci, 1890).

7. Antoine, Paul G. (S.J.): Theologia Moralis (Romæ, 1757), 2 volumes.

8. Bailly, Ludovicus: Theologia Moralis (Dublinii, 1829), 5 volumes.

9. Benedictus, Papa XIV.: De Synodo Diœcesana (Romæ, 1755).

10. Berardi, Carolus S. : Commentaria in Jus Ecclesiasticum Universum (Taurini, 1767), 4 volumes.

11. Billuart, Carolus R. (O.P): Summa S. Thomæ (Paris et Lugduni, 1855), 10 volumes.

12. Bonacina, Martinus : Omnia Opera Theologica (Antverpiæ, 1654), 3 volumes.

13. Bucceroni, Januarius (S.J.): De Censuris, etc. (Romæ, 1895).

14. Cabassutius, Joannes (Cong. Orat.) : Juris Canonici Theoria et Praxis (Dublinii, 1824) 2 volumes.

15. Claremontenses : Under this head "Theologia Dogmatica et Moralis ad mentem S. Thomæ Aquinatis et S. Al-

phonsi de Ligorio," by the Sulpitian Professors of Theology in the Seminary of Clermont, France (Parisiis, 1899), 6 volumes.

16. CONCINA, Daniel (O.P.): (*a*) Disciplina Apostolico-Monastica (Venetiis, 1750); (*b*) Theologia Christiana Dogmatico-Moralis (Romæ, 1755), 12 volumes.

17. CRAISSON, D.: Manuale Totius, Juris Canonici (Parisiis, 1894), 4 volumes.

18. CUNILIATI, Fulgentius (O.P.): Universæ Theologiæ Moralis Accurata Complexio (Matriti, 1780), 2 volumes.

19. D'ANNIBALE, Joseph: Summula Theologiæ Moralis (Romæ, 1896), 3 volumes.

20. DE CASTRO PALAO, Ferdinandus (S.J.): Opus Morale (Lugduni, 1669), 7 volumes.

21. DE PALUDE, Petrus (O.P.): In Quartum Librum Sententiarum (Parisiis, 1514).

22. DE TUDESCHI, Nicholas (O.S.B.): Commentaria Super Libris Decretalium (Venetiis, 1697), 9 volumes. He is usually quoted under the name of the Abbot, or of Panormitanus. He had been abbot, and subsequently became Archbishop of Panorma.

23. DE VARCENO, Gabriel (O.S.F.): Theologia Moralis (Augustæ Taurinorum, 1880), 2 volumes.

24. DEVOTI, Joannes: Institutiones Canonicæ (Florentiæ, 1817), 4 volumes.

25. FAGNANUS, Prosper: Commentaria in Libros Decretalium (Romæ, 1661), 5 volumes.

26. FERRARIS, Lucius, (O.S.F.): Bibliotheca Canonica, etc. (Romæ, 1785), 9 volumes.

27. GERSON, Joannes: Omnia Opera (Antwerpiæ, 1706), 5 volumes. His tract "Circa Materiam Excommunicationum et Irregularitatum Resolutio" and his discussion of S. Greg. ory's "Sententia Pastoris etiam injusta timenda est," are in Volume II., pp. 422–426.

28. HAINE, A. J. F.: Theologiæ Moralis Elementa ex S. Thoma (Lovanii, 1889), 4 volumes.

29. INNOCENTIUS, Papa IV.: Apparatus Mirificus Juris Canonici (Parisiis, 1514), 2 volumes.

30. Kenrick, F. P.: Theologia Moralis (Mechliniæ, 1860), 2 volumes.

31. La Croix, Claudius (S.J.): Theologia Moralis (Ravennæ, 1747), 2 volumes.

32. Layman, Paulus (S.J.): Theologia Moralis (Venetiis, 1740) 2 volumes.

33. Leander, R. P. (Ord. Disc. SS. Trin.): Quæstiones Morales Theologicæ de Censuris Ecclesiasticis (Lugduni, 1678), 10 volumes.

34. Lemhkuhl, Augustus (S. J.): Theologia Moralis (Friburgi Brisgoviæ 1888), 2 volumes.

35. Neyraguet, Deod.: Theologia Moralis (Tornaci, 1841).

36. Palmieri, Dominicus (S.J.): Theologia Moralis (Prati, 1894), 2 volumes.

37. Passerini, Petrus (O.P.): De Hominum Statibus et Officiis Inspectiones Morales (Lucæ, 1732), 3 volumes.

38. Patuzzi, Joannes V. (O.P.): Ethica Christiana (Bassani, 1770), 6 volumes.

39. Prieras, Sylvester (O.P.): Summa (Lugduni, 1552), 2 volumes. Prieras, a contemporary of Savonarola, became Master of the Apostolic Palace under Leo X.

40. Reiffenstuel, Anacletus (O.S.F.): (*a*) Jus Canonicum Universum (Romæ, 1834), 6 volumes; and (*b*) Theologia Moralis (Antverpiæ, 1743), 2 volumes.

41. Roncaglia, Constantinus (Cong. Matris Dei): Universa Moralis Theologia (Venetiis, 1749), 2 volumes.

42. Salmanticenses: Cursus Theologiæ Moralis Collegii Salmanticensis FF. Discalceatorum B. M. de Monte Carmeli (Matriti, 1714), 6 volumes.

43. Salzano, Thomas M. (O.P.): Institutiones Juris Canonici (Neapoli, 1843).

44. Sandæus, Felinus: Commentaria in Decretalium Libros Quinque (Basiliæ, 1567), 2 volumes. Sandæus was Auditor of the Rota under Alexander VI.

45. Scavini, Petrus: Theologia Moralis Universa (Parisiis et Lugduni, 1867), 4 volumes.

46. Schmalzgrueber, Franciscus (S.J.): Jus Ecclesiasticum Universum (Romæ, 1845), 11 volumes.

47. Seminarium, S. Sulpitii: Prælectiones Juris Canonici habitæ 1857, '8, '9 (Parisiis).

48. Sporer, Patricius (O.S.F.): Theologia Moralis (Venetiis, 1704), 3 volumes.

49. Stremler, J: Traité des Peines Ecclesiastiques (Paris, 1860).

50. Suarez, Franciscus (S.J.): Omnia Opera (Parisiis, 1858), 18 volumes.

51. Vecchiotti, Septimus M.: Institutiones Canonicæ (Augustæ Taurinorum, 1875).

52. Wigandt, Martinus (O.P.): Tribunal Confessariorum et Ordinandorum (Venetiis, 1748).

53. Zallinger, J. A.: Institutiones Juris Ecclesiastici (Romæ, 1823), 5 volumes.

54. Zitelli, Zephyrinus: Apparatus Juris Ecelesiastici (Romæ, 1888).

III. Savonarola's Works.

1. Epistolæ Spirituales et Asceticæ, edited by Father Quetif (Paris, 1674).

2. Œuvres Spirituelles Choisies, edited by Father Bayonne (Paris, 1880), 3 volumes.

3. I have also been able to command the following editions of various sermons: —

a. Prediche Sopra Diversi Salmi e Scritture Ecclesiastiche (Firenze, 1833).

b. Sermoni e Prediche (Prato, 1846).

c. Prediche di Fra Girolamo Savonarola, edited by Giuseppi Baccini (Firenze, 1889).

d. Scelta di Prediche e Scritti di Fra Girolamo Savonarola, edited by Villari and E. Casanova (Firenze, 1898).

IV. Patrology.

I have consulted the "Patrologiæ Cursus Completus," edited by J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844 *seq.*) for the works of S. Augustine, S. Jerome, S. Cyprian (all in Volume IV.), S. Gregory the Great, Boetius (all in Volume LXIV.), Gelasius (all in Volume LIX.), Minucius Felix (all in Volume III.).

I have verified all the references in Savonarola's letters as given in this volume, and where his references were general, I have identified and particularized them.

For verifications and for references to older editions of Savonarola's Sermons I am indebted to Father Ferretti.

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